THE BONDMAN.

A STORY OF

THE TIMES OF WAT TYLER.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

The idea of the following tale was suggested on reading the first volume of Robertson's Charles the Fifth, on the Feudal Policy of Germany; and the picture of moral and political debasement presented in those pages, whether as regards the oppressor or the oppressed. Those revolting distinctions have, however, passed away — villein is but a thing that was. But if the old chronicles are to be credited, the monk, whom the author has endeavoured to pourtray in the course of this tale, was the first who whispered in the ear of an English serf, that slavery was not his birthright.

It may, perhaps, be superfluous to add, that all the legal information scattered through the volume, is strictly correct; and every historical event, as nearly so as the machinery of the tale permitted. The critical reader, whose indulgence the writer solicits, will immediately perceive from whence the information has been derived.

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BOOK I.



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CHAPTER I.

About a quarter of a mile south of Winchcombe, on the summit of a gentle elevation, are still the remains of a castle, which, as Fuller says, "was of subjects' castles the most handsome habitation, and of subjects' habitations the strongest castle."

In the month of August, in the year thirteen hundred and seventy-four, this distinguished place, called Sudley Castle, presented an interesting scene — the then owner, in consequence of his father's death, holding his first court for receiving the homage and fealty of his vassals.

The court-yards were thronged with the retainers of the Baron, beguiling the hour until the ceremony called them into the hall. This apartment, which corresponded in magnificence and beauty with the outward appearance of the noble pile, was of an oblong shape. Carved representa-

tions of battles adorned the lofty oaken ceiling, and suspended were banners and quarterings of the Sudley and De Boteler families. Ancestral statues of oak, clad in complete armour, stood in niches formed in the thick walls. The heavy linked mail of the Normans, with the close helmet, or skull cap, fastened under the chin, and leaving the face exposed, encased those who represented the early barons of Sudley; while those of a later period were clad in the more convenient, and more beautiful armour of the fourteenth century. The walls were covered with arms, adapted to the different descriptions of soldiers of the period, and arranged so, as each might provide himself with his proper weapons, without delay or confusion.

The hall had a tesselated pavement, on which the arms of the united families of Sudley and De Boteler (the latter having inherited by marriage, in consequence of a failure of male issue in the former) were depicted with singular accuracy and beauty. About midway from the entrance, two broad steps of white marble led to the part of the hall exclusively appropriated to the owner of the castle. The mosaic work of this privileged space was concealed on the present occasion by a covering of fine crimson cloth. A large arm chair, covered with crimson velvet, with the De Boteler arms richly emblazoned on the high back, over which hung a velvet canopy fringed with gold, was placed in the centre of the elevation; and several other chairs with similar coverings and emblazonings, but wanting canopies, were disposed around for the accommodation of the guests.

The steward at length appeared, and descended

the steps to classify the people for the intended homage, and to satisfy himself that none had disobeyed the summons.

The tenantry were arranged in the following order: —

First—the steward and esquire stood on either side next the steps.

Then followed the vassals who held lands for watching and warding the castle. These were considered superior to the other vassals from the peculiar nature of their tenure, as the life-guards, as it were, of their lord.

Then those who held lands in chivalry, namely, by performing stated military services, the perfection of whose tenures was homage.

The next were those who held lands by agricultural or rent service, and who performed fealty as a memorial of their attachment and dependence.

The bondmen, or legally speaking, the villeins, concluded the array. These were either attached to the soil or to the person. The former were designated *villeins appendant*, because following the transfer of the ground, like fixtures of a freehold, their persons, lands, and goods, being the property of the lord; they might be chastised, but not maimed. They paid a fine on the marriage of females; who obtained their freedom on marriage with a free man, but returned again to bondage on surviving their husband. The latter class were called *villeins in gross*, and differed nothing from the others except in name; the term signifying that they were severed from the soil, and followed the person of the lord. Neither of the classes were permitted to leave the lands of their owner;

and on flight or settlement in towns or cities, might be pursued and reclaimed. An action for damages lay against those who harboured them, or who refused to deliver them up,—the law also provided a certain form of writ by which the sheriff was commanded to seize, or obtain them by force. There was one mode, however, of nullifying the right of capture. If the runaway resided on lands of the king, for a year and a day, without claim, he could not be molested for the future; although he was still liable, if caught beyond the precincts of the royal boundary, to be retaken.

The classification had just finished, when a door at the upper end of the hall was thrown open, and the Baron of Sudley entered, attended by his guests, and followed by a page.

Roland de Boteler was a man about six-and-twenty, of a tall, well-proportioned figure, with an open, handsome countenance; but there was a certain boldness or freedom in the laughing glance of his large black eyes, and in the full parted lips, blended with an expression, which though not perhaps exactly haughty or cruel, yet told distinctly enough that he was perfectly regardless of the feelings of his dependants, and considered them merely as conducive to his amusement, or to the display of military power. A doublet of crimson cloth, embroidered with gold, was well chosen to give advantage to his dark complexion. His tunic composed of baudykin, or cloth of gold, was confined round the waist by a girdle, below which it hung in full plaits, nearly to the knee,—thus allowing little of his trunk hose, of rich velvet, corresponding in colour with the doublet, to be seen.

Over his dress he wore a surcoat or mantle of fine violet-coloured cloth, fastened across the breast, with a gold clasp, and lined with minever. His hair, according to the fashion introduced by the Black Prince, when he brought over his royal captive, John of France, fell in thick short curls below a cap in colour and material resembling his mantle, and edged with minever; and the lip and chin wore neither mustachio nor beard.

His eye fell proudly for a moment on the assembled yeomen, as he took his seat for the first time as Lord of Sudley; but speedily the ceremony commenced.

The individual first summoned from among the group, was a tall athletic young man of about twenty-five, with a complexion fair but reddened through exposure to the seasons. His hair was light-brown, thick and curly, and there was a good-humoured expression in the clear grey eyes, and in the full, broad, well marked countenance, that would give one the idea of a gay, thoughtless spirit—had it not been for the bold and firm step, and the sudden change of feature from gay to grave as he advanced to the platform, and met unabashed the Baron's scrutiny, at once indicating that the man possessed courage and decision when occasion required these qualities to be called into action.

Stephen Holgrave ascended the marble steps, and proceeded on till he stood at the baron's feet. He then unclasped the belt of his waist, and having his head uncovered, knelt down, and holding up both his hands. De Boteler took them within

his own, and the yeoman said in a loud, distinct voice —

" Lord Roland de Boteler, I become your man from this day forward, of life and limb and earthly worship, and unto you shall be true and faithful, and bear to you faith, for the lands that I claim to hold of you, saving the faith that I owe unto our sovereign lord the king."

The baron then bent his head forward and kissed the young man's forehead; and unloosing his hands, Holgrave arose, and bending his head, stood to hear what De Boteler might say.

" You have spoken well, Holgrave," said De Boteler, looking good-humouredly upon the yeoman, " and, truly, if the life of Roland de Boteler is worth any thing, you have earned your reward; and, here, in the presence of this good company, I covenant for myself and my heirs, that you and your heirs, shall hold the land for ever, in chivalry, presenting every feast of the Holy Baptist, a pair of gloves."

" Calverley," said the baron, as Holgrave retired, and while addressing his esquire, his features assumed a peculiar expression: " What a pity it is that a yeoman should reap the reward of a service that *should* have been performed by you had your health permitted !"

The sarcastic smile that accompanied these words, called up a glow even deeper than envy had done; yet, in a calm voice, Calverley replied, " The land, my lord, though the gift be fair, is of little account in comparison with the honour of the deed; but I may humbly say, that if Thomas

Calverley had witnessed his master's peril, he would have been found as valiant in his defence as the yeoman, whose better fortune it was to be present."

"Aye, aye, my good 'squire," said the baron, still in a laughing tone, "your illness, I am told, gave you a most outrageous appetite — doubtless your feeble constitution needed strengthening! Come, come, man, it is but a joke — never look so blank; yet, if *we* laugh, there is no reason why those knaves should stand grinning there from ear to ear. Bid the senior vassal advance."

The vassals who were to perform homage then prepared to go through the customary form; and an old grey-headed man advanced first from the group to do fealty, and, standing before the baron, pronounced after him the following oath, holding his right hand on the gospels: —

"I, John Hartwell, will be to you, my Lord Roland de Boteler, true and faithful, and bear to you fealty and faith for the lands and tenements which I hold of you; and I will truly do and perform the customs and services that I ought to do to you, so help me God!" The old man then kissed the book, and retired to give place to the next; and so on till all who owed fealty had gone through the ceremony.

Lastly advanced from among the bondmen, or villeins, the oldest servitor, and, holding his right hand over the book, pronounced after De Boteler —

"Hear you, my Lord de Boteler, that I, William Marson, from this day forth unto you shall be true and faithful, and shall owe you fealty for the land which I may hold of you in villeinage, and shall

be justified by you both in body and goods, so help me God and all the saints." After kissing the book he withdrew; and the bondmen successively renewed their servile compact.

While the vassals were retiring from the hall, the Lord de Boteler turned to the gentleman near him —

"Sir Robert," said he, "you saw that vassal who first did homage? — to that base-born churl I owe my life. I had engaged hand to hand with a French knight, when my opponent's esquire treacherously attacked me from behind. This was observed by my faithful follower, who struck down the coward with his axe, and, in a moment more, rid me of the knight by a blow that cleft his helmet and entered his brain. He also, by rare chance, I know not how, slew the bearer of that banner yonder, and, when the battle was over, laid it at my feet."

"You have made him a freeman since then?" inquired Sir Robert.

"No; he received his freedom from my father when a boy for some juvenile service — I hardly remember what. Yet I shall never forget the look of the varlet — as if it mattered to such as he whether they were free or not! He stared for an instant at my father — the tears trembling in his eyes, and all the blood in his body, I verily believe, reddening his face, and he looked as if he would have said something; but my father and I did not care to listen, and we turned away. As for the land he has now received, I promised it him on the field of battle, and I could not retract my word."

"No, baron," said Sir Robert; "the man earned it by his bravery: and surely the life of the Lord de Boteler is worth more than a piece of dirty land."

De Boteler, not caring to continue so uninteresting a subject, discoursed upon other matters; and the business of the morning having concluded, he retired with his guests from the hall.

It was about a fortnight after this court day that the fortunate yeoman one morning led his mother, Edith Holgrave, to the cottage he had built on the land that was now his own.

Edith entered the cottage, her hand resting for support upon the shoulder of her son — for she was feeble, though not so much from age as from a weak constitution. As she stepped over the threshold she devoutly crossed herself; and when they stood upon the earthen floor, she withdrew her left hand from the arm that supported her, and, sinking upon her knees, and raising up her eyes, exclaimed —

"May He, in whose hands are the ends of the earth, preserve thee, my son, from evil. And oh! may He bless this house!"

While she spoke, her eyes brightened, and her pale face for a short time glowed with the fervor of her soul.

"Stephen, my son," she continued (as with his aid she arose and seated herself upon a wooden stool), "many days of sorrow have I seen, but this proud day is an atonement for all. *My* father was a freeman, but *thy* father was a serf; — but all are alike in *His* eyes, who oftentimes gives the soul of a churl to him who dwelleth in castles,

and quickens the body of the base of birth with a spirit that might honour the wearer of crimson and gold. My husband was a villein, but his soul spurned the bondage ; and oftentimes, my son, when you have been an infant in my arms, thy father wished that the free-born breast which nourished you, could infuse freedom into your veins. *He* did not live to see it ; but oh ! what a proud day was that for me, when my son no longer bore the name of slave ! I had prayed — I had yearned for that day ; and it at length repaid me for all the taunts of our neighbours, who reviled me because my spirit was not such as theirs !"

" Come, come, mother," interrupted Holgrave, " don't agitate yourself ; there is time to talk of all this by-and-bye."

" And so there is, child — but I am old ; and the aged, as well as the young, love to be talking. Stephen, you must bear with your mother."

" Aye, that I will, mother," replied Holgrave, kissing her cheek which had assumed its accustomed paleness ; " and ill befal the son that will not !"

Leaving his mother to attend to the visitors who crowded in to drink success to the new proprietor in a cup of ale, Stephen Holgrave stole unobserved out of the cottage towards nightfall.

Passing through Winchcombe, he arrived at a small neat dwelling, in a little sequestered valley, about a quarter of a mile from the town — the tenant of which lowly abode is of no small consequence to our story.

Like Holgrave, Margaret was the offspring of the bond and the free. Her father had been a

bondman attached to the manor of Sudley; and her mother a poor friendless orphan, with no patrimony save her freedom. Such marriages were certainly of rare occurrence, because women naturally felt a repugnance to become the mother of serfs; but still, that they did occur, is evidenced by the law of villeinage, ordaining that the children of a bondman and free woman should in no wise partake of their mother's freedom.

It might be, perhaps, that this similarity in their condition had attracted them towards each other; or it might be that, as Margaret had been motherless since her birth, and Edith had nursed and reared her till she grew to womanhood, from the feelings natural to long association, love had grown and strengthened in Stephen's heart. Indeed, there were not many of her class who could have compared with this young woman. Her figure was about the middle height of her sex, and so beautifully proportioned, that even the close kerchief and russet gown could not entirely conceal the symmetrical formation of the broad white shoulders, the swelling bust, and the slender waist. Plain braids of hair of the darkest shade, and arched brows of the same hue, gave an added whiteness to a forehead smooth and high; and her full intelligent eyes, with a fringe as dark as her hair, were of a clear deep blue. The feminine occupation of a sempstress had preserved the delicacy of her complexion, and had left a soft flickering blush playing on her cheek. Such was Margaret the beloved — the betrothed — whom Holgrave was now hastening to invite, with all the simple eloquence of honest love, to become

the bride of his bosom — the mistress of his home.

The duskiness of the twilight hour was lightened by the broad beams of an autumn moon; and as the moonlight, streaming full upon the thatch, revealed distinctly the little cot that held his treasure, all the high thoughts of freedom and independence, all the wandering speculative dreamings that come and go in the heart of man, gave place, for a season, to one engrossing feeling. Margaret was not this evening, as she was wont to be, sitting outside the cottage door awaiting his approach. The door was partly opened — he entered — and beheld a man kneeling before her, and holding one of her hands within his own!

"Stephen Holgrave!" cried the devotee, jumping up, "what brings you here at such an hour?"

"What brings me, Calverley!" replied Holgrave, furiously, "who are you, to ask such a question? What brings *you* here?"

"My own will, Stephen Holgrave," answered Calverley in a calm tone; "and mark you — this maiden has no right to plight her troth except with her lord's consent. She is Lord de Boteler's bondwoman, and dares not marry without his leave — which will never be given to wed with you."

"You talk boldly, sir, of my lord's intents," answered the yeoman sulkily.

"I speak but the truth," replied Calverley. "You have been rewarded well for the deed you did; and think not that your braggart speech will win my lord. This maid is no meet wife for such as you. My lord has offered me fair lands and

her freedom if I choose to wed her: and though many a free dowered maid would smile upon the suit of Thomas Calverley, yet have I come to offer wedlock to Margaret."

"Margaret!" said Holgrave fiercely, "can this be true? answer me! Has Calverley spoken of marriage to you?—why do you not answer? Have I loved a false one?"

"No, Stephen," replied Margaret, in a low trembling voice.

Holgrave's mind was relieved as Margaret spoke, for he had confidence in her truth. He knew, however, that Calverley stood high in the favour of De Boteler, and he determined not to trust himself with further words.

"Margaret," said Calverley suddenly, "I leave Sudley Castle on the morrow to attend my lord to London. At my return I shall expect that this silence be changed into language befitting the chosen bride of the Baron de Boteler's esquire. Remember you are not yet free!—and now, Stephen Holgrave, I leave not this cottage till you depart. The maiden is my lord's nief, the cottage is his, and here I am privileged — not you."

Fierce retorts and bitter revilings were on Holgrave's tongue; but the sanctuary of a maiden's home was no place for contention. He knew that Calverley did possess the power he vaunted; and, without uttering a word, he crossed the threshold, and stood on the sod just beyond the door.

Calverley paused a moment gazing on the blanched beauty of the agitated girl, her cheek looking more pale from the moonlight that fell

upon it; and then, in the soft insinuating tone he knew so well how to assume —

"Forgive me, Margaret," said he, "for what I have said. But oh," he continued, taking her hand, and pressing it passionately to his bosom, "You know not how much I love you! — Come, sir, will you walk?" Then kissing the damsel's hand he relinquished it; and Margaret, with streaming eyes and a throbbing heart, watched till the two receding figures were lost in the distance.

Holgrave and Calverley pursued their path in sullen silence. There were about a dozen paces between them, but neither were one foot in advance of the other. On they went through Winchcombe and along the road, till they came to where a footpath from the left intersected the highway. Here they both, as if by mutual agreement, made a sudden pause, and stood doggedly eyeing each other. At considerably less than a quarter of a mile to the right was Sudley Castle; and at nearly the same distance to the left was Holgrave's new abode. After the lapse of several minutes, Calverley leaped across a running ditch to the right; and Holgrave, having thus far conquered, turned to the left on his homeward path.

The reader will, perhaps, feel some surprize that an esquire of the rich and powerful Lord de Boteler should be thus competing with the yeoman for the hand of a portionless humble nief; but it is necessary to observe, in the first place, that in the fifteenth century esquires were by no means of the consideration they had enjoyed a century before. Some nobles, indeed, who were upholders of the

ancient system, still regarded an esquire as but a degree removed from a knight, but these were merely exceptions; — the general rule, at the period we are speaking of, was to consider an esquire simply as a principal attendant, without the least claim to any distinction beyond. Such a state of things accorded well with the temper of De Boteler; — he could scarcely have endured the equality, which, in some measure, formerly subsisted between the esquire and his lord. With him the equal might be familiar, but the inferior must be submissive; and it was, perhaps, the humility of Calverley's deportment that alone had raised him to the situation he now held. Calverley, besides, had none of the requisites of respectability which would have entitled him to take a stand among a class such as esquires had formerly been.

About ten years before the commencement of our tale, a pale emaciated youth presented himself one morning at Sudley Castle, desiring the hospitality that was never denied to the stranger. Over his dress, which was of the coarse monks' cloth then generally worn by the religious, he wore a tattered cloak of the dark russet peculiar to the peasant. That day he was fed, and that night lodged at the castle; and the next morning, as he stood in a corner of the court-yard, apparently lost in reflection as to the course he should next adopt, the young Roland de Boteler, then a fine boy of fifteen, emerged from the stone archway of the stable mounted on a spirited charger. The glow on his cheek, the brightness of his eyes, and the youthful animation playing on his face, and ringing in the joyous tones of his voice, seem-

ed to make the solitary dejected being, who looked as if he could claim neither kindred nor home, appear even more care-worn and friendless. The youth gazed at the young De Boteler, and ran after him as he rode through the gateway followed by two attendants.

He then wandered about with a look of still deeper despondence, till the trampling of the returning horses sent a transient tinge across his cheek. He followed Roland's attendants, and again entered the court-yard. By some chance, as the young rider was alighting, his eye fell on the dejected stranger, who was standing at a little distance fixing an anxious gaze upon the heir.

"Who is that sickly-looking carle, Ralph?" enquired De Boteler.

The attendant did not know. The youth interpreted the meaning of Roland's glance, and approached, and, with a humble yet not ungraceful obeisance —

"Noble young lord," said he, "may a wanderer crave leave to abide for a time in this castle?"

"You have my leave," replied the boy in the consequential tone that youth generally assumes when conferring a favour. "Indeed, you don't look very fit to wander farther; — Ralph, see that this knave is attended to."

The stranger was now privileged to remain, and a week's rest and good cheer considerably improved his appearance. He did not presume, however, to approach the part of the castle inhabited by the owners; but never did the young Roland

enter the court-yard, or walk abroad, but the silent homage of the grateful stranger greeted him.

This strange youth was Thomas Calverley, and, by the end of a month, Roland's eyes as instinctively sought for him when he needed an attendant, as if he had been a regular domestic.

It was good policy in Calverley to propitiate the young De Boteler; for had he presented himself to his father, although for a space he might have been fed, he could never have presumed to obtrude himself upon his notice.

There was a humility in the stranger which pleased Roland's imperious temper; *he* had granted the permission by which he abided in the castle, and he seemed to feel a kind of interest in his protegé; and the envy of his attendants was often excited by their young lord beckoning to Calverley to assist him to mount, or alight, or do him any other little service. Calverley began now to be considered as a kind of inmate in the castle, and various were the whispered tales that went about respecting him. At length it was discovered that he was a scholar — that is, he could read and write; and the circumstance, though it abated nothing of the whisperings of idle curiosity, entirely silenced the taunts he had been compelled to endure. If still disliked, yet was he treated with some respect; for none of the unlettered domestics would have presumed to speak rudely to one so far above them in intellectual attainments.

Such a discovery could not long remain a secret; — the tale reached the ears of young De Boteler, and, already prepossessed in his favour,

it was but a natural consequence that Calverley should rise from being first an assistant, to be the steward, the page, and, at length, the esquire to the heir to the barony of Sudley. But the progress of his fortunes did but add to the malevolence of the detractor and the tale-bearer; theft, sacrilege, and even murder were hinted at as probable causes for a youth, who evidently did not belong to the vulgar, being thus a friendless outcast. But the most charitable surmise was, that he was the offspring of the unhallowed love of some dame or damsel who had reared him in privacy, and had destined him for the church; and that either upon the death of his protectress, or through some fault, he had been expelled from his home. Calverley had a distant authoritative manner towards his equals and inferiors, which, despite every effort, checked inquisitiveness; and all the information he ever gave was, that he was the son of a respectable artizan of the city of London, whom his father's death had left friendless. Whether this statement was correct or not, could never be discovered. Calverley was never known to allude to aught that happened in the years previous to his becoming an inmate of the castle: what little he had said was merely in reply to direct questions. It would seem, then, that he stood alone in the world, and such a situation is by no means enviable; and although duplicity, selfishness and tyranny, formed the principal traits in his character; and though independently of tyranny and selfishness, his mind instinctively shrunk from any contact, save that of necessity, with those beneath him, yet had he gazed upon

the growing beauty of Margaret till a love pure and deep — a love in which was concentrated all the slumbering affections, had risen and expanded in his breast, until it had, as it were, become a part of his being.

Margaret had a brother — a monk in the abbey at Winchcombe, to whose care she was indebted for the instructions which had made her a skilful embroidress, and still more for the precautions which had preserved her opening beauty from the gaze of the self-willed Roland de Boteler. Though the daughter of a bondman, her services had never been demanded; and father John had ultimately removed her from Edith's roof to the little cottage already mentioned.

Calverley had intended to see Margaret again before leaving the castle; but De Boteler, having changed the hour he had appointed, there was not a moment to spare from the necessary arrangements. Never before had Calverley's assumed equanimity of temper been so severely tried; the patient attention with which he listened, and the prompt assiduity with which he executed a thousand trifling commands — although, from the force with which he bit his underlip, he was frequently compelled to wipe away the blood from his mouth — shewed the absolute controul he had acquired over his feelings — at least so far as the exterior was concerned.

The chapel bell rang for mass, at which Father John, the brother of Margaret, officiated, in consequence of the sudden illness of the resident chaplain. Calverley waited till the service was concluded; and then, first pausing a few minutes

to allow the monk to recite the office, he unclosed the door of the sacristy and entered. Father John was sitting with a book in his hand, and he still wore the white surplice.

The ecclesiastic, on whose privacy Calverley had thus intruded, was a man about thirty-five, of a tall muscular figure, with thick dark hair encircling his tonsure, a thin visage, and an acquiline nose. There was piety and meekness in the high pale forehead; and in the whole countenance, when the eyes were cast down, or when their light was partly shaded by the lids and the projecting brows: but when the lids were raised, and the large, deeply-set eyes flashed full upon the object of his scrutiny, there was a proud — a searching expression in the glance which had often made the obdurate sinner tremble, and which never failed to awe presumption and extort respect. Such was the man whom Calverley was about to address; and from whose quiet, unassuming demeanour at this moment, a stranger would have augured little opposition to any reasonable proposal that might be suggested: but Calverley well knew the character of the monk, and there was a kind of hesitation in his voice as he said —

"Good morrow, holy father."

The monk silently bent his head.

"My Lord de Boteler," resumed Calverley, "will, in a few minutes, depart hence. I attend him; but before I go, I would fain desire your counsel."

"Speak on, my son," said the monk in a full deep voice, as Calverley paused.

"Father John, you have a sister ——"

"What of her?" asked the monk, looking inquiringly on the esquire.

"I love her!" replied Calverley, his hesitation giving place to an impassioned earnestness.—"Why look you so much astonished? Has she not beauty, and have I not watched the growth of that beauty from the interesting loveliness of a child, to the full and fascinating charms of a woman. Father John, you have never loved — you cannot tell the conflict that is within my heart."

"But," asked the monk, "have you spoken to Margaret?"

"Last evening I went to give her freedom and to ask her love, when Stephen Holgrave ——"

"Did the baron empower you to free her?" eagerly asked the monk.

"Yes, — but Holgrave entered and ——"

"She is still a nief?"

"Yes; — when that knave Holgrave entered, I could not speak of what was burning in my breast."

"Stephen Holgrave is not a knave," returned the monk. "He is an honest man, and Margaret is betrothed to him."

There was a momentary conflict in Calverley's breast as the monk spoke; — there was a shade across his brow, and a slight tremor on his lip, but he conquered the emotion — love triumphed, and, in a soft imploring tone, he said —

"Think you, father, Holgrave loves her as I do; or think you his rude untutored speech will accord well with so gentle a creature. Oh! father John, be you my friend. Bid her forget the man who is unworthy of her! She will listen to you —

she will be guided by you—you are the only kinsman she can claim;—and surely even you must wish rather to see your sister attended almost as a mistress in this castle, than the harassed wife of a laborious yeoman. Oh! if you win her to my arms, I here swear to you, that not even your own heart could ask for more gentle care than she will receive from me. My happiness centres in *her*—to love her, to cherish her—to see the smile of joy for ever on her lips."

At this moment a knock was heard at the door. Calverley opened it, and De Boteler's page appeared to say, that if Thomas Calverley had wanted the aid of the priest, he should have applied sooner, for his lord was now waiting for him.

"Tell my lord," said Calverley, "I will attend him instantly."

The page withdrew, and Calverley, turning to the monk, asked hastily if he might reckon on his friendship.

"Thomas Calverley," replied John, "I believe you do love my sister, but I cannot force her inclinations;—I will not even strive to bias her mind; there is a sympathy in hearts predestined to unite, which attracts them towards each other;—if that secret sympathy exist not between you, ye are not destined to become as one."

"Then you will not seek to win her to my love," asked Calverley, impatiently.

"I will tell her," returned the monk, "that a love so devoted, so disinterested, deserves in return an affection as pure: but if, after all this, her heart still prefers the yeoman Holgrave, I will say no more."

"And, think you, I shall endure rejection without an effort?"

"It is now too late! Why, if your happiness rested upon her, did you defer declaring your love till the moment when she had promised to become the wife of another? Know you not, Thomas Calverley, that even as the rays of the bright sun dissolve the glittering whiteness of the winter snow, just so do kind words and patient love enkindle warm feelings in the bosom of the coldest virgin, and awaken sympathies in her heart that else might for ever unconsciously have slumbered."

"You talk strange language," replied Calverley in a voice that had lost all its assumed gentleness. "But — *remember* — I have not sought your sister's love to be thus baffled — remember! ——" Calverley was here interrupted by a quick knocking at the door.

"Remember, father John," he continued, pausing ere he unclosed the door, and speaking rapidly, "that mine is not the love of a boy — that Thomas Calverley is not one whom it is *safe* to trifle with — that Margaret is a bondwoman — and that her freedom is in my hands — *remember!*"

He repeated the last word in a tone of menace, and with a look that seemed to dare the monk to sanction the union of his sister with Holgrave. He opened the door, but, ere he passed through, his eye caught an expression of proud contempt flashing in the dark hazel eyes, and curving in the half-smiling lip of the man he had thus defied; — and prudence whispered, that he had not properly estimated the character of the priest.

CHAPTER II.

It was on a lovely October morning that the travellers returned to Sudley. The whole region of the sky was of so clear and deep a blue, that it seemed as if the pure cold breath of the morning had driven every cloud and vapour far from the skies of merry England. The sun shone brightly upon the yet green meadows, upon the hedges, and upon the trees with their broad branches, and their scanty brown leaves: the birds, rejoicing in the sun-light, were singing hymns of grateful melody, as they darted among the branches, or sailed and curved in the blue ether. Our fair Margaret, sympathizing in the gladness of nature, could almost have sung in concert with the feathered choir, as she tripped along with the light step that indicates a cheerful heart. She had just reached that point of the Winchcombe road where the green lane, turning to the left, led directly to her home, when, catching a glimpse of an approaching figure, she raised her eyes and beheld — Calverley.

Whether Calverley's quick glance had caught the marriage ring upon her uncovered finger, or, whether the basket on her arm, together with the

circumstance of her being abroad at an hour that used to be devoted to her needle, told him she was no longer a thing to be thought of with hope, or looked on with love, it is difficult to say; but he stood suddenly still, and his cheeks and lips became pale — almost livid. Margaret turned and walked hastily down the path, her pallid cheek, and trembling limbs, alone telling that she had recognized Calverley. He stood silently gazing after her, till a winding in the path, shut her out from his view. He then walked rapidly on to Winchcombe, entered the first vintner's he came to, and, to the surprise of the host, who knew Master Calverley to be a sober man, called for a measure of wine, drank it off at a draught, and throwing down the money, departed as abruptly as he came. In a few minutes after, he entered the room of old Luke, the steward Sudley Castle.

"Master Luke," said he, with an assumed carelessness of manner, "you are rather chary of my lord's wine — you have not yet offered me the cup of welcome."

"I ask your pardon, Calverley," replied the steward, "but you so seldom care for wine, that one hardly thinks of offering it to you: here, however, is a cup that will do your heart good."

Calverley took the cup, and drinking it off with as much zest as if he had not already tasted wine that morning— "Any news?" said he, "master Luke — any news?"

"Not much, 'squire. — Stephen Holgrave, indeed, has got married, and, I'll warrant me, there will be a fine to do about it; for he has married a *nief*, and you know my lord is very particular about

these matters: — he told me, no longer ago than just before he went away this last time, that he would not abate a jot of his due, in the marriages or services of his bond-folk. To be sure the lass is sister of the monk who now shrieves the castle, and, as my lord thinks much of Holgrave, it may all blow over."

"Who married them?" asked Calverley, in a stifled voice.

Oh! Father John, to be sure — nobody else —"

"Did he!" said Calverley, in a voice that made the old man start; but, before the astonished steward could reply, he burst from the room. None of the inmates of the castle saw him again during the remainder of that day.

When he appeared before De Boteler the next morning, such a change had twenty hours of mental suffering produced in his countenance, that his lord, struck by the alteration, inquired if he were ill. Calverley said something about a fall that had partly stunned him, but assured De Boteler he was now perfectly well. While he yet spoke, the steward entered, to say that Stephen Holgrave had come to crave his lordship's pardon for marrying a nief without leave, and also to pay the merchet.

"Married a *nief!* has he?" returned De Boteler. By my faith I thought the kern had too proud a stomach to wed a nief. I thought he had no such love for villeinage. I do not like those intermarriages. Were free maidens so scarce that this Holgrave could not find a wife among them?"

Calverley slightly coloured as De Boteler spoke; he knew his lord was no admirer of people stepping in the least out of their way, and it seemed

probable it was to him he alluded, when he expressed his dislike of unequal marriages.

"Why, my lord," said Luke, in reply to De Boteler's interrogatory, "there is hardly a free maiden in the parish that would not have been glad of Stephen; but, though I have never seen her, I am told this wife of his is the comeliest damsel between this and Winchcombe: and, besides, she is not like a common nief—and then, my lord, she is the sister of the good monk John."

"Father John's sister, is she?" asked the baron. "Why then my good esquire here, has more to do with the matter than I—but however, Luke, go tell Holgrave I cannot attend to him now—"Why, Calverley," continued De Boteler, when the steward had withdrawn. "Is not this the maiden you spoke to me about? Do not turn so pale man, but answer me."

"Yes, my lord," replied Claverley.

"And did this Holgrave dare to wed a nief of mine!—when I had already disposed of her freedom and her hand?"

"Yes, my lord."

"By my faith, the knave is bold to thwart me thus."

"My lord," said Calverley; "the evening before you left the castle for London, I went to the maiden's cottage to ask her hand; Holgrave immediately came in, and I then distinctly told him that your lordship had given me the maiden's freedom, and also had consented that I should wed her, and yet, you see what regard he has paid to your will!"

"Yes, this is the gratitude of these base-born

vassals; but, Calverley, what priest presumed to wed them?"

"The monk John."

"What! the wife's brother! He who has attended the chapel since the death of the late good father?"

"Yes, my lord."

"By Heavens! they seem all conspiring to set my will at nought! — he, at least should have better known what was due to the lord of this castle."

"The monk," replied Calverley, "was not ignorant of my lord's will: and it vexes me, not on my own account, for it was merely a passing fancy; but it vexes me, that this proud, stubborn, priest, while he is eating of your bread, and drinking of your cup, should, in the teeth of your commands, do that which I could swear no other priest would have dared to do; it ill becomes him to preach obedience who —— "

"True, true, I will see to him — he shall answer for what he has done — but now Calverley, tell me honestly, for you are not wont to be familiar even with your fellows — tell me what you saw in this maiden that could make you wish to rival Stephen Holgrave?"

"Her beauty, my lord."

"What! is she so fair?"

"My lord, I have seldom looked upon one so fair. In my judgment she was the loveliest I ever saw in these parts."

"Say you so!" returned De Boteler. "I should like to see this boasted beauty, even if it were to convince me of your taste in these matters. Cal-

verley, order one of the varlets to go to Holgrave, and desire him to come to the castle directly—and, mind you, he brings his wife with him."

Calverley could scarcely repress a smile of exultation as the baron delivered this command, but composing his countenance to its general calm expression, he bowed to De Boteler, and immediately withdrew.

Holgrave, when the henchman delivered the baron's command, hesitated, and looked angrily to Margaret.

"What ails thee, my son," asked Edith. Is she not thy wife?—and can the baron break asunder the bonds that bind ye?—or dost thou fear that Margaret's face may please him—and that he would strive to take from the man who saved his life in the battle, the wife of his bosom! Shame! shame!"

"No, no, mother," returned Holgrave, musing; "yet I would rather she should not go to the castle—I have seen more of the baron than you: and, besides, this Calverley——"

Holgrave, however, considering it better not to irritate the baron by a refusal, at length consented that Margaret should accompany him, and they quitted the cottage together.

"Come hither, Holgrave," said De Boteler, as Holgrave entered. "Is this your wife?"

"Yes; my lord," replied the yeoman, with a humble reverence.

"Look up, pretty one," said De Boteler to Margaret! — Now, by my faith Holgrave, I commend your choice. I wonder not that such a prize was contended for. Margaret, — I believe that is

your name? Look up! and tell me in what secret place you grew into such beauty?"

Margaret raised her bright blue eyes, that had been as yet hidden by the long dark lashes, and the downcast lids; but, meeting the bold fixed gaze of the baron, they were instantly withdrawn, and the deep blush of one unaccustomed to the eyes of strangers, suffused her cheek and brow, and even her neck.

"Were you reared on this barony, Margaret?" resumed the baron.

"Yes, my lord," answered Margaret, modestly, raising her eyes: "my mother was a freeman's daughter; my father was a bondman on this land: they died when I was but a child; and Edith Holgrave reared me till I grew up a girl and could work for myself— and then ——"

"You thought you could not do better than wed her son through gratitude. That was well — and so this good squire of ours could not expect to find much favour in your eyes. But, do you not know, you should not have wedded without my consent?"

"My lord," answered Holgrave; "I beg your pardon; but I thought your lordship wouldn't think much of the marriage, as your lordship was not at the castle, and I did not know when you would return. Here is the merchet, my lord, and I hope you will forgive me for not awaiting your return."

"I suppose I must, for there is no helping it now; and by my faith, it is well you did not let me see that pretty face before you were wedded,—but take back the merchet," he continued, waving back

with his hand, the money which Holgrave was presenting. "Keep it. An orphan bride seldom comes rich; and here is a trifle to add to it, as a token that De Boteler prizes beauty—even though it be that of a bondwoman!" As he spoke, he held a broad piece of gold towards Holgrave.

"Not so, my lord," said Holgrave, suffering the coin to remain between De Boteler's fingers.—"Not so my lord. I take back the merchet with many thanks, but I crave your pardon for not taking your gold. I have no need of gold—I did not wed Margaret for dower—and with your lordship's leave I pray you excuse my taking it."

"As you please, unthankful kern," replied the baron, haughtily. "De Boteler forces his gifts upon no one—here," he continued, throwing the piece to an attendant, who stood behind his chair—"*you* will not refuse it." He then turned round to the table and commenced a game at cards, without further noticing Holgrave. The yeoman stood a few minutes awaiting the baron's pleasure, but perceiving he did not heed him, presently took Margaret's hand, and making a low obeisance, retired.

When the game was finished, De Boteler threw down the cards.

"Calverley," said he, "think you that this Margaret loves her husband?" A slight shade passed over Calverley's cheek as he answered,

"I should hardly think so, my lord. She is—her temper is very gentle—Holgrave is passionate, and rude, and—"

"It is a pity she should be the wife of such a carle"—mused his lord.

That afternoon De Boteler, throwing a plain dark cloak over his rich dress, left the castle, took the path that led to Holgrave's abode, and raising the latch, entered the cottage.

Margaret was sitting near the window at needle-work, and Edith in her high-backed arm-chair, was knitting in the chimney-corner. Margaret blushing deeply, started from her seat as her eyes so unexpectedly encountered those of the baron.

"Keep your seat, pretty dame," said De Boteler. "That is a stout silk. For whom are you working these bright colours?"

"It is a stole for my brother, the monk, my lord," replied Margaret in a tremulous voice.

"Your work is so beautiful" returned De Boteler, looking at the silk," that I wish you could find time to embroider a tabard for me."

"My lord," replied Edith, rising from her seat and stepping forward a few paces, "Margaret Holgrave has little leisure from attending to the household of her husband. There are abundance of skilful sempstresses; and surely the Baron de Boteler would not require this young woman to neglect the duty she has taken upon herself."

De Boteler looked at Edith an instant with a frown, as if about to answer fiercely; but after a moment he inquired calmly,

"Does your son find his farm answer, dame?"

"Yes, my lord, with many thanks to the donor. Stephen has all he can wish for in this farm."

"That is well," returned De Boteler; and then, after a momentary but earnest gaze at Margaret, he turned away and left the cottage.

Holgrave entered soon after the baron's depar-

her husband. "Oh, Byles! Byles! look at this child! What will become of me?"

"The saints preserve us!" ejaculated Byles, as he looked at the babe: "Mary, how is this?"

"Oh! don't ask me; but go for Master Calverley. For God's sake, do not stand as if you were bewitched: see! see! he is dying. The poor child! What will become of me? Run, Byles, run, for mercy's sake, and tell Master Calverley."

Byles stood looking, with a countenance expressive of stupified horror, and yet, as if doubting that the livid, distorted, suffering creature could be the fine blooming boy he had so lately seen. At length, aroused by the increasing energy of Mary, he turned silently round and left the room; as he closed the door, the agonized spirit of the little Roland passed away.

In an instant Byles returned with Calverley, and even *he* started and uttered an exclamation, as his eyes fell on the ghastly face of the dead child.

"Mary Byles, how did this happen?" asked Calverley, eagerly.

"Master Calverley, I will tell you truly," answered Mary, in a voice scarcely audible from its tremor. "You have been our best friend, and you would not see me hung? It was all a mistake — I am sure I would n't hurt a hair of the dear creature's head." And here the feelings of woman so far prevailed, that she shed some disinterested tears.

"You could have no motive to destroy the child — but tell me quickly what you have to say." Calverley spoke with a harshness that instantly recalled all Mary's fears and selfishness.

"Edith Holgrave," said she, "gave me some medicine to —"

"Edith Holgrave!" interrupted Calverley, with a quickness of voice and eagerness of look that told how greatly the name interested him.

"Yes, Edith Holgrave told me to give ten drops out of that little bottle, (pointing to the empty phial,) "and I — gave — but, oh! Master Calverley, I forgot —"

"You gave it all?" said Calverley, impatiently.

"Yes."

"And you will swear it was a draught that Edith Holgrave gave you that has killed the child?" said Calverley, with a brightening countenance.

"Oh, yes," replied Mary; "but, indeed —"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Calverley. "Hear me, or you will be hanged! If you hope to save your life, Mary Byles, you must swear that you gave it according to Edith's directions — breathe not a syllable of the drops!"

Mary looked with a fearful wildness at Calverley, as she comprehended his meaning; but Byles said quickly,

"What! do you mean her to hang old Edith?"

"Certainly," returned Calverley, coolly, "unless you prefer a gallows for your wife. But I dare say you would rather see Mary hanged than that old witch! I will leave you to manage the matter between yourselves."

"Oh, don't leave us! — don't leave us!" said Byles, in an agony. "Oh, save me! save me!" sobbed Mary.

"Was any one present when you gave it?" inquired Calverley, as he turned round and addressed Mary.

"Yes; Winifred handed me the bottle, but the child began to cry, so I sent her out."

"It was well she was here," returned he: "and now, remember—not a word of the drops! swear, simply, that the draught destroyed the infant." And, without awaiting her reply, he seized the pale and trembling Byles by the arm, and dragged him from the room into the passage. He then unlocked a door that had never been observed by either Byles or his wife, and, closing it after them, led the yeoman down a flight of dark steps, and, pausing a moment at the bottom to listen, he unlocked another door, and Byles found himself in a dark passage that branched from one of the entrances to the court-yard to some of the culinary offices. "Go you that way, and I will go this," said Calverley, "and, remember, you know nothing of the child's death." As he spoke, he darted from Byles, and gained the court-yard without further observation. He walked carelessly about, till a female domestic passing, he called to her, desiring her to go and ask Mary Byles if the young Lord Roland was ready to meet his parents, as they were momentarily expected. The woman departed, and he walked over to the gate between the front towers as if looking for the return of his lord.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT ails you, Stephen," asked Margaret, alarmed at the strange paleness of the yeoman's countenance, and the agitation of his manner as he entered the cottage on the afternoon the child died. But Holgrave, without replying to her interrogatory, hastily closed and bolted the door. He then drew the large oak table from the side of the wall, and placed it as a barricade before it. "Stephen, what means this bolting and barring?" inquired Edith, as she saw with surprise his defensive preparations. "What fear you, my son?"

"Fear! mother," replied Holgrave, taking a lance and battle-axe from their place over the chimney, and firmly grasping the former as he stood against the table; "I do not fear now, mother, nor need you — for, by the blessed St. Paul, they shall pass over my mangled body before they reach you!"

"Stephen Holgrave, are you mad?" returned Edith alarmed: "tell me the meaning of this! — Speak, I command thee!"

"Oh, mother, I cannot tell you," answered

Holgrave, turning away his face from her searching glance; "Oh, no, I cannot tell you!"

"Stephen, you were not used to answer me thus. I charge you, by the authority and love of thy mother, and in the name of the blessed saints, to tell me what has happened."

"Alas! my mother, you will know it soon enough. It is said you have — have — bewitched — or poisoned — the baron's son!"

"Oh, mother!" shrieked Margaret. "Fly! — to the abbey, and take sanctuary!"

"Margaret!" replied Edith, "I stir not hence. The guilty may take refuge from the anger of the laws; but it is not for the innocent to fear and fly like the felon!"

Margaret then threw herself at the feet of Edith, and besought her, in the most earnest and pathetic manner, to take refuge at Hailes Abbey, in which she was seconded by Holgrave. The old woman remained silent; but there was a brightness — a glistening in her eyes as if a tear had started; — but if a tear did start, it did not fall. At length, recovering her composure, she rose firmly from her seat —

"My son," said she, "lay down your arms, I command. Should my life be offered up to the vengeful spirit of Thomas Calverley, who alone can be the foul author of this charge, it will be only taking from me a few short years — perhaps days — of suffering. But thou hast years of health and life before thee, and thou hast this gentle weeping creature to sustain."

"What!" interrupted Margaret warmly; "Oh, no — the mother of Stephen Holgrave to be torn

from us without a blow! Did he not fight for his lord? and shall he not risk his life for his mother?"

"And is this thy counsel, foolish woman?" replied Edith, in a tone of rebuke."

"She speaks my purpose," said Holgrave, as he grasped still firmer the poised weapon.

Edith stepped quickly up to her son and knelt before him —

"Oh Stephen, my son, my first-born — thy mother kneels to thee. Lay aside that lance and hearken to the words of her who bore thee, and nourished thee. Oh, bring not sorrow and ruin on thyself and her! What would be the bitterness of my dying moments if my son lived not to lay me beside his father? — if thy Margaret was left to mourn in lowly widowhood — and, perhaps, to fall beneath the base arts of Calverley! Oh, my son, my son, by the soul of thy dead father, and by the blessing of thy mother, resist not! — Hark! they come — they come! Haste, Stephen — Give me the weapon."

Holgrave, shocked and agitated, could only think of raising his mother from her knees. He suffered her, without resistance, to take the lance from his hand, and then attempt, with her weak fingers, to remove the barricade, while advancing footsteps were heard without.

The hostile party reached the cottage, and the latch was quickly raised; but, finding it resist their attempts, the voice of Calverley, in an authoritative tone, pronounced —

"In the name of the Lord Roland de Boteler, I demand the body of Edith Holgrave, who is ac-

cused of the foul crimes of witchcraft and murder. — Open the door, Stephen Holgrave, if you are within!"

"Fiend of hell! it is he!" muttered Holgrave, gnashing his teeth, but without moving.

The party without seemed to have expected resistance; for the next moment a blow was struck upon the door which made the whole house shake; and the besieged perceived that they were forcing an entrance with the trunk of a young tree, or some such machine, in imitation of the ram, not yet disused in warfare. Speedily the timber yielded and cracked; and Holgrave, starting from the stupor in which he was plunged, caught up the axe, and posted himself in an attitude of striking near the door.

"Pollute not thy hand with the blood of the base," said Edith, grasping her son's arm — "Judgment is mine, saith the Lord!"

"Thomas Calverley," continued she, in a loud calm voice, "produce your warrant!"

"The word of the Lord de Boteler," replied Calverley, "is warrant enough for the capture of the murderess of his child. Surrender, Stephen Holgrave, I command!"

At this moment a noise was heard, as if an entrance had been effected through the roof; and ere Holgrave could release his arm from his mother's hold, a shriek from Margaret struck upon his ear. He turned his head and beheld her covering him with outstretched arms from the drawn bows of two retainers, who appeared at the door of the room, or loft, above.

"Archers, do your duty!" shouted Calverley;

but at the moment some voices without exclaimed suddenly,. "My lord comes! My lord comes!" and the bowmen drew back, and Holgrave instinctively dropped his axe.

De Boteler, either through anxiety for Edith's arrest, or from an apprehension that Holgrave might oppose it, did indeed approach, and as he advanced, with hasty and agitated steps, and beheld the evidence of resistance in the rent roof and shattered door, his rage was extreme.

"Tear down the cottage!" cried he, his voice choaked with passion, "and take this foul sorceress dead or alive!" The command was about to be fulfilled when the door was unbarred and opened by Holgrave.

"Stop;" said the baron, "the knave surrenders. Base-born churl, how dare you oppose my commands?"

"My lord," said the intrepid yeoman, "I had a right to defend my dwelling against unlawful assault."

"Unlawful! Do you call the orders of your lord unlawful?"

"My Lord De Boteler," said Edith, stepping forward, and looking full at the baron. "It *is* unlawful to send armed men, in the open day, without warrant, save your own will, to attack the house of a faithful vassal and set his life in jeopardy. Had you sent a messenger in peace, Edith Holgrave would have obeyed the mandate. There was little need of all this tumult to take an aged woman, whom *He* knoweth is innocent, and whom you, Lord of Sudley, in your own breast —— "

"Foul mouthed witch!" interrupted De Boteler,

"keep thy tongue silent — no more — lest I anticipate justice by hanging you at your own threshold!"

"That you dare not do!" said Edith, calmly.

"Bear her away, Calverley — bear her away, or I cannot answer for the result. Place her in the dungeon at the top of the tower, and let no one see her till to-morrow, when she shall be conveyed to Gloucester Castle."

That same day, Calverley summoned, or rather packed, a jury at which he himself presided; and a verdict of wilful murder was returned against Edith. Apprehensive, however, that the charge of poisoning might not be sustained upon the unsupported testimony of Mary Byles, he easily influenced the credulous jurors to believe that witchcraft had as much to do with the child's death as poison. His usual tact, however, had forsaken him on this occasion, and it was not until the verdict was announced and recorded, that the unwelcome conviction flashed across his mind, that the temporal courts could exercise no jurisdiction over the crime of witchcraft. It was now too late to alter the language of the inquisition. It had gone forth to hundreds who awaited its promulgation with intense anxiety; and the language of the verdict that "Edith Holgrave delivered to Mary Byles, a certain charmed or poisonous drug, for the purpose of destroying Roland De Boteler, and which said drug was administered to, and caused the death of, the said Roland," was, in a few hours, familiar to the whole town and neighbourhood.

Calverley was too well aware of the jealous vigi-

lance the church exercised in cases appertaining to its jurisdiction, not to feel apprehensive that its influence might be exerted to defeat the operation of the temporal court; for, although the ecclesiastical courts could not award the last penalty to persons convicted of witchcraft or heresy, yet they were as tenacious of their exclusive right to investigate such cases, as if they possessed the power to punish. When a person accused of those crimes was adjudged to die, a writ was issued from the court of King's Bench called a writ *de heretico comburendo*, by virtue of which the victim was handed over to the temporal authority, and underwent the punishment awarded. But it was seldom, at this period, that the obstinacy of a delinquent brought about such a consummation, for a confession of the crime (if the first) only subjected him to ecclesiastical penance or censure. It was not till the reign of James the First that we find any legislative enactment against witchcraft. The well known passage in Exodus which conveys the divine command to the great lawgiver, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," was the supposed authority from which the church derived its jurisdiction; and though the priests of the old law were armed with, and probably exercised, the ordinance in its fullest meaning, yet the disciples of a purer and milder doctrine delegated that authority to a power more suited to carry its decrees into effect.

The news of these transactions had no sooner reached the ears of father John, than he hastened to the abbot of Winchcombe, for the purpose of beseeching him to demand the prisoner in the name of the church.

Simon Sudbury, the mitred abbot, was a man of a fair and florid complexion, with large, expressive eyes, that even at the age of fifty were of a deep and clear blue. He was tall, and just sufficiently corpulent to give an air of dignity to his figure; but even had his person been insignificant, there sat on his brow, and glanced in his eye, that pride and conscious superiority which, even from an equal, would have extorted respect.

The monk made a lowly obeisance as he approached the abbot, and when desired to make known his business, he detailed in a brief but perspicuous manner the charge against Edith. The superior listened with calm attention; but it was evident that the Baron de Boteler was not one with whom he would feel disposed to interfere.

"My son," said he, when father John had ceased, "it seems an oppressive case according to your statement; but you are well aware how much our holy church has been shorn of her power, and how eager the monarch, and nobles, and even the people, are to abridge our privileges." The abbot paused, and again resumed: "I fear, my son, our remonstrance would be disregarded by this young lord, and only cause a further indignity to be cast on our holy church."

"My lord," answered the monk, "I would not urge you; but I so well know the woman's piety and innocence, that it would be to participate in the guilt of her accusers not to implore your lordship's interposition." The abbot took up a pen that lay before him, and was about to write; but he laid it down again, saying —

"Would it not be better to await her trial, and

should she be found guilty, petition the king for a pardon?"

"My lord, she may not survive the imprisonment."

"Well, my son, her earthly troubles would then cease without our interference — the innocent are better away from this sinful world, where oppression rules with a strong hand."

"True," answered the monk, with increased tenacity; "but will the Lord of life hold us guiltless, if we heed not the cry of the innocent?"

The abbot looked frowningly on father John, as he again took up the pen. "My son, you are not serving the church by such pertinacity. This application will only expose one of its dignitaries to humiliation; however, I shall write to the Baron, since you desire it, and demand that the accused be transferred to the tribunal over which we preside."

The abbot waved his hand impatiently, and the monk withdrew.

The hall of Sudley had been hastily hung with black cloth, and the walls of the adjoining apartment exhibited a similar covering; and here, surrounded by a number of lighted tapers, lay the corpse of the little Roland. At the foot of the bier knelt a monk in silent prayer, and at the side sat the Lady Isabella, absorbed in a grief which none but a mother can feel, and regardless of her husband's intreaties to withdraw."

"Oh, no, not yet," she said, "I cannot yet leave my babe. It was but yesterday my heart bounded at the thought of caressing my lovely boy; and to-day—but this witch—this murderess!" she continued, turning round, and elevating her

voice; "what of her? Does she confess her guilt?"

"No," replied Boteler; "and she persists that the potion, if rightly administered, would rather have benefited than harmed our Roland."

"Heed her not — she is as artful as vile — they are an evil brood altogether. Know you, De Boteler," she added quickly, "whether the young woman participated in the deed of darkness?"

"Nothing has appeared against her," replied the baron.

At this instant an attendant entered, and delivered a letter to her lord, from the abbot of Winchcombe, adding that two messengers were waiting in the hall.

The baron untied the silken cord that confined the parchment, and having hastily perused it, handed it to the Lady Isabella.

"De Boteler," said the lady, rising from her seat when her eyes had run over the writing, "this woman shall *not* escape justice. Go, my lord — remember your murdered child, and compromise not with those who would screen the guilty from punishment."

De Boteler moved from the illuminated bier, and entered the hall with a haughty step; and as his eye fell on Father John, the frown on his brow increased. He did not, however, appear to heed him, but, turning to the abbot's messenger, said,

"Monk! — I have read my lord abbot's letter, and it would seem that he ought to have known better than interfere in such a matter. My child has been poisoned — the evidence is clear and con-

vincing — why, therefore, does he make such a demand?"

"My lord baron," replied the messenger, "the verdict states that a charmed potion had been administered to the young lord. This accusation precedes the charge of poisoning: therefore, the spiritual court must first decide on the fact of witchcraft, before the temporal tribunal can take cognizance of the other offence."

"And does your abbot think, when the hope of my house has perished, whether by false incantations or deadly poison, that —— Depart, monk!" continued he, in a choked voice, "and tell your abbot that this woman's guilt or innocence shall be tried by the laws of the realm."

"Then, my lord, you will not comply with the mandate of my superior?"

"Mandate!" repeated the enraged baron—"ha! ha! Mandate, forsooth! From whom — from an impotent priest of a waning church — and which church, with the blessing of God and our good king, will soon cease to arrogate to itself the encroachment which it has made upon the royal prerogative."

"Note down this speech, Father John," said the messenger. "And now, Baron of Sudley, I formally demand, in the name of Simon Sudbury, the mitred abbot of Winchcombe, the body of Edith Holgrave, whom you impiously and rebelliously detain against the privileges of holy church: and — "

"Hold, minion! Cease! or you will tempt me to hang the culprit from the battlements of yonder

keep, if it were only to afford news to your master. Presumptuous shaveling! know you not that the royal franchise granted to this manor empowers me to sit in judgment on my vassals, and that it is only as an act of grace that she is handed over to a jury of the county."

"The 'act of grace,' my lord," said Father John, looking sternly at De Boteler, "only shows that your mind is not so fully convinced of this woman's guilt as to embolden you to take the charge of her death entirely upon your own conscience—"

"Base-born knave! do you think you wear a coat of mail in that hypocritical garb. Ho! Calverley, let the woman be instantly transmitted to Gloucester castle, that my lord abbot may thunder his anathemas against its walls, if it so please him; and then bear this meddling monk to the tumbrel, that he may learn better than to beard his natural lord under his own roof."

"Not so, my lord," said Isabella, at the moment entering the hall, attracted by the loud tones of De Boteler's voice; "not so, my lord; the tumbrel is not for such as he, however rude his bearing. My Lord de Boteler," turning to the monk, "has doubtless given you an answer—retire, and do not farther provoke his wrath."

"Lady," returned Father John, with dignity, "I retire at your bidding, but not through fear of the Baron de Boteler. Let him, if he will, insult and expose an anointed priest—but, woe to him if he does! The blight has already fallen on the blossom—beware of the tree!"

The baroness looked rebuked; and before De Boteler could reply, the two monks left the hall.

"Did I not anticipate this result?" said the abbot, looking sternly at the mortified monk, as the messenger detailed the interview with the baron.

Father John bowed.

"*Your* importunity," continued the abbot, has cast this indignity on holy church, and on me its minister; but nevertheless, this lord, powerful though he be, must be taught obedience to that power he has contemned."

"My lord," replied the monk, encouraged by the abbot's energy, "our holy church, thank heaven, is not without *one* able and zealous advocate. A timorous attitude at this moment would only give fresh vigour to those who seek to abridge its power."

"Aye, my son, there has been timidity enough in those prelates, who tamely acquiesced in the late enactment against the clergy; and, alas! how often since have the servants of God been dragged from the altar and imprisoned like felons, merely to gratify the haughty barons in their desire to humble our holy religion! The king, too, is a masked enemy, and countenances the impious attempts to abridge our rights."

"And yet, my lord," returned John, "the church is the natural bulwark of royalty: by humbling it, he paralyzes a power the most zealous, and the best calculated to maintain the divine right of kings."

"It is, indeed, the stay and hope of monarchy," replied Sudbury; "but kings are men, and fallible. This woman's case will, nevertheless, demonstrate whether further encroachments will be

submitted to by the prelates without a struggle. I shall write letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Abbot of Westminster, and you, my son, shall bear them to London. Retire for the present, and prepare for your journey."

The abbot was as good as his word, and presently the fate of the obscure Edith Holgrave became a question which kindled the fires of party zeal in half the noble breasts in the kingdom. It is not to the purpose of our story to describe the intrigue which, at this period, tore asunder the court of Edward. Suffice it to say, that after many stormy discussions in the cabinet, at which the abbot's first messenger, father John, and De Boteler himself, were interrogated — the church triumphed; the Baron of Sudley was condemned to offer an expiatory gift, and a writ was issued to prohibit the court of assize from trying the prisoner.

On the day the prohibitory writ left London, a small iron box, with a superscription, addressed to Thomas Calverley, was left by a stranger at Sudley Castle, and immediately after, by another messenger, a packet, in which, within many envelopes, a key was concealed. Calverley, naturally concluding that this key belonged to the box he had just received, with a variety of perplexing conjectures, unlocked it, and beheld the crimson damask dress of a pursuivant, on which the royal arms were embroidered in gold, and beneath the dress a purse of gold coin and a scroll of parchment, on which the following was written, evidently in a disguised hand: —

" A chancery messenger will leave London on

the morning you receive this : he is the bearer of a writ to prohibit the court of assize at Gloucester from trying Edith Holgrave.—Surely justice should not be thus defeated — the messenger will rest for some time to-morrow evening at Northleach. — Could not the dress that accompanies this enable you to demand the writ from the messenger in the king's name. Remember, however, the writ must not reach Gloucester."

Calverley started at the boldness of the proposition, and resolved, much as he desired that Edith should suffer, not to engage in so daring an act. But in a few minutes, as his mind became more familiarized with the idea, much of the supposed danger of the undertaking disappeared. He might disguise his countenance so, that, aided by the dress, detection would be almost impossible; and even if detected, the letter, which, despite of every effort at concealment, bore evidence of the Lady Isabella's handwriting, would compel her to exert all her influence in his favour. Nevertheless, Calverley, possessing less physical than moral courage, could not bring himself to look with total indifference upon even the possibility of personal danger, and he determined, therefore, to associate with him in the adventure the bold and reckless Byles.

Calverley would have willingly risked every thing *but* his personal safety to be revenged of her who strove to attach to him the suspicion of crime; and even when mounted on his steed, with a large dark cloak thrown over him to conceal the material of his dress, lest its singularity should attract ob-

servation, he could not help feeling a slight inward trepidation.

As they proceeded, the heath gradually assumed the appearance of a scanty wood, the trees became more numerous, the thickets of greater extent, and the animal on which Calverley rode was frequently impeded by the withering stumps of trees that had been carelessly felled. He alighted just at the point where an abrupt opening between the clustering thickets led by a circuitous path of not more than a hundred yards to the high road to Gloucester.

Here Calverley's quick ear caught the sound of the tramping of a horse — his heart beat quick — it might be a traveller journeying to Gloucester, but it was more probable that it was the messenger. He threw the bridle of his horse over the branch of a tree, sprang to the end of the path, and, concealing himself behind the under-wood, discovered in a moment, by the dark medley hue of the rider's dress, that it was the man he expected. He hurried back, and, mounting his steed, waited till the echo of the horse's hoofs could no longer be distinguished; and then, giving the impulse to his own spirited animal, he was the next moment bounding at full speed after the messenger, followed at a distance by his accomplice.

Calverley was a good horseman, and it was but a short space ere he was within a few yards of the messenger, and shouting to him to halt. The man stopt, and, turning in his saddle, surveyed with some surprise (which could be seen even in the duskiness of twilight) the bright colours that distinguished the garb of a pursuivant.

"What! for Gloucester, friend? You must have been hard upon my heels the whole way for ——"

"No," interrupted Calverley, in an assumed gruffness of tone, and with something more than his usual authoritativeness, "my journey is ended now. The king has recalled that writ of prohibition you were to deliver to the judge. You are to return the writ to me, and proceed with your other dispatches."

The messenger had heard — for state secrets will sometimes transpire — that the chancellor had a struggle to obtain the writ; and this knowledge, though it made him the more readily credit Calverley's assertion, yet vexed him that his master should be foiled. Looking, therefore, with a surly scrutiny at the steward —

"The writ," said he, "was given to me by my lord archbishop; and how do I know that I should be right in surrendering it to a stranger? Have you any order from his grace?"

"Order from his grace," repeated Calverley, sarcastically: "Do you not know, my good friend, that *your* master is in disgrace with *mine*, and that the eloquent William of Wykeham will, ere many days pass, be high chancellor of England. Come, come, give me the writ, and don't lose time. I must not stir from my saddle this night, unless to change horses, till I reach Westminster."

The news of Islip's dismissal confounded the messenger. This new pursuivant might be in the interest of William of Wykeham, and it would be ill policy to make an enemy where every good office might be wanting to preserve him his situa-

tion. At all events, there was little use in contending: he accordingly unlocked his bag, and Calverley, with a thrill of pleasure, felt the writ within his grasp.

A hasty salutation passed, and the horsemen rode off in opposite directions. Calverley then, sending his associate home, spurred on to Gloucester.

The steward's first care was to put up his horse at an inn a little within the north-gate of Gloucester; and then, proceeding on to where the four streets, leading from the four gates of the city form a cross, he went down Westgate-street, and, passing the beautiful cathedral, presently reached the Severn. The evening was dark, and, looking cautiously round, he dropt the damask dress,—and, as he thought, the prohibitory writ,—in the oblivious waters.

CHAPTER V.

The steward, after thus relieving his mind from all anxiety respecting the dress, proceeded to the sign of the Mitre in Silver Girdle-street, a well known resort for certain useful adjuncts to the courts of law.

Calverley entered the Mitre, and, after calling for some wine, was shown into a little private room by the host. A few minutes after, the door opened, and a man entered and took his seat at the end of the table at which Calverley was sitting. The individual who thus invaded the privacy of the steward was a man not much above the middle height. His face had once been comely, but a close intimacy with the bottle had given to his countenance a bloated and somewhat revolting expression. The latter peculiarity, however, was only to be detected by the few who read the heart in the "human face divine;" and even these might be deceived into a prepossession favourable to the man; for his large, full, blue eyes, beamed with much apparent benevolence, and his nose, though clothed in a fiery mantle and tipped with

two large carbuncles, was not a nose that Lavater himself could with conscience have objected to. Large, black, whiskers, and thick, bushy, hair, with a beard of the same hue, had given him the characteristic *soubriquet* of Black Jack. On the whole his appearance and deportment were those of a respectable burgher of the period. This man was not a stranger to Calverley, and Black Jack was, by some chance, still better acquainted with the person and character of the steward. He had heard every particular relative to the child's death, and consequently divined the motive of the steward's visit to the Mitre, and, as he now and then cast a keen glance at Calverley, he might be likened to the author of evil contemplating a man about to engage in some heinous offence, the commission of which would connect them in still closer affinity.

A flaggon of ale soon followed Black Jack, in which he drank Calverley's health with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, though this was the first time he had interchanged courtesies with the steward, who returned the compliment coldly, though not in that repulsive tone which forbids further intimacy.

A pause of a few minutes ensued, and though each was anxious to introduce some allusion to the intended trial, yet both hesitated to begin;—Calverley, from a prudential fear of committing himself, and Black Jack from an apprehension of hazarding a chance of employment by too ready a proffer of his services.

The latter became tired first of his reserve, and perceiving that Calverley, like a spirit, would only

speak when spoken to, resolved, with characteristic modesty, to plunge *in medias res.*

"Master," said he, "you are here, no doubt, on the business of the witch? For my part, I hold such creatures in religious abhorrence. That's neither here nor there, however — can I do anything to serve you?—That is the short of the matter."

"Master Oakley," replied the steward, with a grim smile which told he knew his man, "you have correctly surmised the business that brings Lord de Boteler's steward to the Mitre—you know the particulars of the affair?"

"I do."

"Well," resumed Calverley, "the evidence is not so good as I could wish. A country jury might acquit her."

"Aye, aye, I see--it shall be done—she returns no more to Winchcombe——"

"But, you know," interrupted Calverley, quickly, "that she deserves death for the death she has inflicted."

"That's neither here nor there: I never trouble myself about such matters—I am no schoolman—the judge will see to that; and, if she *is* to be disposed of, it matters little whether by substantial freeholders or myself and my eleven."

The price was now agreed upon, and the purse that accompanied the pursuivant's dress was more than sufficient to satisfy the exorbitant demand of the foreman.

"I may depend upon you, Master Oakley?" said the suspicious steward, pausing at the door.

"By the green wax! may you — Black Jack is

a man of honour. As sure as Judge Skipwith sits on the bench, so sure shall I and my men sit in the jury-box. He is a carle to doubt me," said Black Jack, as Calverley shut the door — " Has he emptied his flask? No — by the green wax! he seems to think as little of his wine as his money; and, after emptying the cup, left the Mitre.

The next night, being the eve of the trial, Black Jack entered the Mitre, and, ordering a fresh gallon of stout ale, proceeded on to the little room where he had seen Calverley, and in which, around an oak table which nearly filled the area of the apartment, ten men were seated. A measure stood before them which they had just emptied, and were murmuring at their leader's close hand that restricted them to a single gallon.

This room was sacred to the confraternity: here they held their meetings — here they were instructed by their chief in the parts allotted to them in the shifting drama of crime. And here, under lock and key, pledged to the host, were the garments in which they appeared in the jury-box as respectable yeomen. Black Jack cast a rapid glance round the table as he entered, and perceiving one seat still unoccupied, he frowned with impatience.

" What!" exclaimed he, " has Beauchamp broke cover on such a night as this? Speak!"

" He has not been seen to-day," said a sleek-faced old man who sat opposite.

" Not seen to-day — hah! — Has the fellow shrieved himself? or is he laid up after last night's tipple?"

" Aye, Master," said another, " he is laid up

but I fear he has forgot the shrieving. However, he will never again say guilty or not guilty in a jury-box, or kiss the book in justification of bail !"

"Saints protect us ! not dead !" exclaimed the foreman. The man nodded assent : — "Then, by the green wax ! we shall lose two of the best jobs we have had these three years. Come, come, Harvey, you only banter — the knave is lazy."

"By Saint Luke, poor Beauchamp is as dead as he need be, master," answered Harvey. "I saw him this morning, and his face was as black as — your own this moment !"

Black Jack seized the empty flaggon and was about to hurl it at the head of the facetious under-strapper, when his arm was arrested by the old man who had first spoken.

"Hold, master," said he, "you will find it difficult to fill Beauchamp's seat, without making another vacancy."

The irritated foreman replaced the flaggon on the table but swore he would have no more jesting. "Poor Beauchamp," continued he, "is gone — the cleverest man among ye — no whining — no qualms about him, when a shilling was to be earned by swallowing a pill or sending a traveller before his time to the other world ! How unlucky, he had not postponed his flight for another week ; this witch would then be disposed of and the sheriff satisfied. Poor Jack, poor Jack ! where shall we find a substitute — but a substitute must be had if it were he of the cloven foot himself ! This news has made me thirsty," continued he, raising the pitcher to his lips, "but remember, no jesting."

Black Jack then buried his face in his hands for

some minutes, meditating how he should supply the place of the defunct Beauchamp. In vain he racked his brain; he knew many who would accept the offer, but they were untried.

"This assize will be a hungry feast," he at length exclaimed; "we may bid adieu to the Mitre—I must refund the money I received on account of the witch, and the old Ferrett, too, must have his earnest money—what is to be done? Do ye know any one who could be trusted to stand in the shoes of Beauchamp?"

"We leave the filling up vacancies to our foreman," returned they.

"Aye, aye! ye shrink from responsibility, and throw all on my shoulders," returned Black Jack, snatching up a renewed flagon, and drinking freely, as if to forget his perplexity in the intoxicating influence of the beverage. "Aye, aye! but, knaves, the money ye have received must be refunded, and ye may go starve, or rob, for aught I care."

"But, master, where, think you, shall it be found?" answered Harvey: "you might as well dissolve this society, as think of making us refund what is already scattered in every corner of Gloucester."

"Dissolve this society! impudent knave!" retorted the foreman: "I should like to know what new profession ye are fit for: how could ye live but for me? Think ye the sheriff would expose himself by communing with such untaught knaves? No more sulkiness, or I take you at your word. Give me another swoop of the goblet." It was handed to him, and, after ingulphing a long draught, he

slowly drew breath—his eyes were observed to brighten with some new idea, and, in a moment after, he started from his seat, exclaiming, in a burst of joy:

"By the green wax! I've got him!—I've got him at last—I shall be back in half an hour!" He then darted out of the room, leaving his confederates conjecturing who the welcome auxiliary was to be that should fill the void at the oak table.

It was a full hour, however, before the indefatigable purveyor re-appeared, accompanied by a dark, sun-burnt looking young man, attired in the garb of a dusty-foot or foreign pedlar. He appeared to be one of an inferior description of Galley-men, or Genoese merchants, (as described by Stowe,) who traded to England, and trafficked with a coin called galley-half-pence. They chiefly resided at a wharf named Galley Key, in Thames-street, and travelled as itinerant hawkers through the kingdom. His countenance, however, was not that of a Genoese—it had more the appearance of the English cast of features, though, judging from its dark and seaman-like hue, it was many years since he left his native country.

"Come, my friends, be not cast down! Black Jack and his eleven are themselves again!" cried the foreman, exultingly. "Here, Harvey, fill up a goblet for our new friend. Poor Jack's chair is occupied during the assize; see ye make much of his successor."

"Is he not engaged as a fixture?" asked Harvey, with some disappointment.

"No, no, Harvey; his feet are not for the narrow limits of Gloucester. He is a bird of passage,

that makes its periodical migrations, and cannot be called peculiar to one country more than another: in short, he is a kind of privileged outlaw."

"Aye, aye, master; he breathes the various atmospheres of Christendom, and yet I'll swear he is a dog of a heathen, notwithstanding, ha! ha! ha! No offence," he added, addressing the galleyman; "jests are privileged in this free society."

"Christian men," returned the dusty-foot, goodhumouredly, "would be suffocated in this poisonous air you breathe, and would die, like the heathen, without benefit of clergy."

"That's right, galleyman — you have hit him there. That knave's skull is a perfect book of entries, and can furnish precedents for every crime, from high treason to a simple assault. He'll crack jokes to the last. But, by the green wax! we must think of a proper description for him, to insert in the pannel. Let me see — aye, I have it. A man from Worcester has lately settled at Deerhurst; his name is James Mills, a substantial man. Here, Harvey," as he took from his pocket a slip of parchment, and wrote the necessary particulars, and sealed it carefully, "take this to Lawyer Manlove. We must now see whether Beauchamp's clothes will suit our friend here."

The host was called in, and unlocked a drawer in which they were deposited. The galleyman, with visible reluctance, arrayed himself in the garments, and he was observed to shudder more than once during the investiture of the dead man's apparel.

"He's better have some warm ale," said the old man we have before mentioned, with a sneer —

"these garments seem to weigh down the spirit of our new guest."

"Aye, and well they may," returned the foreman: "it is not every man who could feel at ease in the clothes of a —— Hang it! my brain wanders—fill up a fresh bumper." Another and another followed, and dispelled all symptoms of compunction in the heart of the foreman and his companions; till even their new guest, so powerful is example, was almost persuaded that conscience was a bug-bear. It was late ere they separated, to re-assemble the next morning for more important transactions.

The next morning, Sir Robert Skipwith, Chief Justice of England, entered the court, and took his seat on the bench. After the names of the jury were called over, Black Jack, and the eleven, respectively answered, and entered the box, clad in respectable yeomen's or burgher's apparel, and their countenances wearing a gravity suitable to the occasion. They looked like a jury to whom either a guilty or innocent prisoner would, unhesitatingly, have committed his cause. When the prisoner was asked whether she had any objection to the jury, and told, that if so, she might challenge the number prescribed by law, the attention of the spectators was naturally fixed on Edith, who replied in the negative; and her face and figure were certainly ill-calculated to make a favourable impression.

Her face was shrivelled and yellow, and the dark full eyes that now, as it were, stood forth from the sunken cheeks, looked with a strange brightness

on the scene, and seemed well adapted to stamp the character of witch on so withered a form. And perhaps there were few of those entirely uninterested in the matter who now gazed upon her, who would not have sworn that she merited the stake.

'Calverley had beheld the group as they entered the court, and instantly averting his eyes from the mother and son, he fixed them upon Margaret.

The stranger's eyes that now gazed upon her, beheld her as a lovely, interesting creature; but Calverley, who had not seen her since the day that Edith was arrested, saw that the rich glow which used to mantle on her cheek, had given place to a sickly paleness. It is true, that as she entered the court, there was a faint tinge upon that cheek, but it fled with the momentary embarrassment which had caused it. That full dimpled cheek itself was now sunken, the lips were colourless, and the eyes dim.

A momentary thought of "Oh, had she been mine, would she have looked thus?" and an execration against Holgrave told that the demon had not wholly possessed her quondam lover; but the next moment, as Holgrave, after looking round the assembly, caught the eye of his enemy, the solitary feeling of humanity died away, and Calverley turned from the fierce glance of the yeoman with all the malignity of his heart newly arrayed against him.

After the usual preliminaries, the indictment was read, and Edith called upon to plead:

"Not guilty, my lord," she replied, in a voice so loud and distinct, that the surprised hearers

wondered so feeble a creature could possess such a voice.

The evidence was then entered into, and Mary Byles was called into the witness box. A rod was handed to her to identify the prisoner, and she then, without venturing to encounter the look of her whose life she was about to swear away, deposed to having received the liquid which had occasioned the child's death, from Edith; and to certain mysterious words and strange gestures used by the prisoner on delivering the phial.

When she had concluded, Edith questioned her, if she had not, at the time of giving her the medicine, warned her of its dangerous strength, and strictly enjoined her not to administer more than ten drops; but Mary, prepared for such questions, positively denied the fact, alleging, that Edith had merely desired her, when she saw the child looking pale, to give it the contents of the phial.

" My lord," said Edith, in her defence, " this woman has sworn falsely. The medicine I gave was a sovereign remedy, if given as I ordered. Ten drops would have saved the child's life; but the contents of the phial destroyed it. The words I uttered were prayers for the life of the child. My children, and all who know me, can bear witness that I have a custom of asking *His* blessing upon all I take in hand. I raised my eyes towards heaven, and muttered words; but, my lord, they were words of prayer—and I looked up as I prayed, to the footstool of the Lord. But it is in vâin to contend: the malice of the wicked will triumph, and Edith Holgrave, who even in thought never harmed one of God's creatures, must be

sacrificed to cover the guilt, or hide the thoughtlessness of another."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "have you any witnesses to call on your behalf?"

"My lord, my daughter was present when I gave the medicine; but I seek no defence."

Margaret faintly answered to her name, and entered the box. She delivered her evidence with so much simplicity and meekness, that it seemed to carry conviction to the majority of the audience. In vain did the wily lawyer for the prosecution endeavour to weaken her testimony on her cross-examination. Truth, from the lips of innocence, triumphed over the practised advocate, and Edith would probably have had a favourable verdict from an impartial jury and an upright judge; but from the present, she was to receive no mercy. The jury were bribed to convict, and the judge influenced to condemn. Skipwith now proceeded to sum up the evidence, artfully endeavouring to impress the jury with the strongest belief in the statement of the nurse, "who," he said, "could have no motive but that of bringing to justice the destroyer of her lord's heir;" and, on the other hand, insinuating, as he commented on Margaret's evidence, that her near relationship to the prisoner must be cautiously weighed: but ere he had concluded, a sound at the entrance of the court attracted his attention Horton, the tall and dignified abbot of Gloucester, with his mitre on his head, his staff in his hand, and clad in the robes of his order (that of Saint Benedict), entered the hall. His crosierer preceded him, bearing a massive golden cross; on his right and left hand

walked two monks, and several others, (among whom was father John,) closed the procession.

A passage was instinctively made for the dignitary, who walked majestically on till he stood before the bench, and then pausing, he said in a clear firm voice —

"My lord judge, I demand, in the name of holy church, and in the name of the gracious king Edward, that you deliver up this woman, Edith Holgrave, to me. A writ from the chancery, signed by the royal hand, commanding her delivery to the ecclesiastical power, has been sent down, and how is it that thus, in opposition to the church's prerogative, and the royal will, I see the woman standing a criminal at this bar?"

"My lord abbot," replied Skipwith, bowing to the priest, "the writ you speak of has been recalled; a chancery messenger was here not three days since."

"Did he not deliver to you the writ?" interrupted the impetuous Horton.

"Pardon me, my lord abbot, but I believe I have already said, that the writ has been recalled. The messenger, indeed, came with a prohibitory writ respecting the prisoner; but when, within a few miles of Gloucester, a royal pursuivant, expressly from the king, overtook him, and to *him* the writ was delivered."

The calm dignity of Skipwith's reply produced some effect upon the abbot; for in a tone less abrupt than before, he replied —

"My lord judge, that writ of prohibition has not been recalled. This monk, pointing with his staff towards father John, left London two days

subsequent to the messenger, and there was not then the least intimation of the royal mind being changed."

"My lord," returned Skipwith, with a slight smile, "know you so little of Edward as to imagine that no change could pass in his royal mind without the monk being privy to it?"

"But," returned Horton, losing his temper at such scepticism, "this monk was lodged in the palace of his Grace of Canterbury; and, at the very hour of his departure, his Grace spoke as if the surrender of the woman were already accomplished. Would he have spoken thus had the writ been recalled?"

"Probably his Grace was ignorant that the prohibition was recalled?"

"Simon Islip ignorant! However, you admit that a writ was sent?"

Skipwith bowed.

"Then as readily may you believe that it had been kept back through fraud and malice, and that you have brought this woman before a tribunal incompetent to judge of matters relating to witchcraft. But now, my lord judge, repair the wrong done, by delivering her up to a dignitary of holy church."

"Abbot Horton," returned the chief justice, gravely, "the poisoning has been satisfactorily proved, and a strong presumption of witchcraft created in my mind, from the mysterious behaviour of the prisoner when the drug was delivered to the nurse. But even were the witchcraft a more prominent feature of the case, I do consider the king's courts are empowered by the late act, which pro-

vides that all felonies may be heard and determined by the king's justices, to take cognizance of this crime. Witchcraft is a *felony* at common law."

"That act," replied Horton, hastily, "relates to local magistrates."

"And are the judges of the land to be less privileged than petty magistrates?"

"I came not to argue points of law," my lord judge," returned Horton, vehemently, "but to demand a right. Will you surrender this woman?"

"My lord abbot," replied Skipwith, "the indictment has been read — the evidence has been gone through with the customary attention to justice—I have only to finish my charge to the jury, and it will remain with them to pronounce her guilt or innocence."

The cool and determined tone of the chief justice exasperated the abbot; and, fixing a stern glance upon the judge,

"It is not justice, Sir Robert Skipwith," said he, "to wrest the unfortunate from the merciful interposition of the church—it is not justice, but a high contempt of supreme law, to set at nought the merciful commands of the sovereign—it is not justice to usurp a power that belongs not to you, in order to crush a friendless woman — it is not justice to set the opinions of an individual against the sacred authority of God's church. The church alone, I repeat, has power to judge in cases where the soul is concerned, as in heresy and witchcraft."

His voice had risen with each pause in the period, till the last sentence was uttered in a tone that reverberated through the court. An instant of hushed silence followed, and then, to the sur-

prise of all, Edith raised herself up as erect as her feebleness would allow, and resting one hand upon the bar, she raised the other towards the abbot, and said,

"My lord abbot, my soul is guiltless of any crime which the church in its mercy absolves, or the law in its justice punishes — I am neither murderess nor witch. As much would my soul abhor communing with the spirits of darkness, as my heart would shrink from destroying the innocent ——"

"Peace, woman!" interrupted the abbot: "peace — presume not to interfere." And then, turning to the judge, he added, "Sir Robert Skipwith, I again demand of you the custody of this woman."

"Abbot Horton, you have had my answer," returned Skipwith, in a tone of perhaps still more vehemence than the abbot's.

The face of the provoked dignitary glowed, his eyes flashed, and he looked, in his glittering mitre and splendid vestments, like a being more than human, as, turning from the judge, and raising the staff he held in his right hand, he pointed it towards the assembled crowd, and said,

"I call upon this assembly to witness, that I have, in the name of holy church, demanded the accused — that I have demanded her in the name of the king, by virtue of his royal writ of prohibition, which has been basely purloined — and that, unmindful of that divine power, and despite the king's express command, Judge Skipwith, the servant of the one, and an unworthy son of the other, has contemptuously refused this demand. But," he added fiercely, as he again turned towards

Skipwith, and shook his staff at the no less irritated judge, " the royal ermine is disgraced on the shoulders of such as thee — beware that it is not speedily transferred to one more worthy to bear it. I say again, beware!"

The abbot then lowered his staff, the crosierer once more preceded him, and, followed by the monks, he proudly walked forth from the court, the people, as he passed, forming a passage, and humbly bending forward to receive his blessing.

The eyes of the spectators, which, during this strange scene — this trial of strength between the lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries — had alternately wandered to each, were now anxiously directed to Skipwith alone, who hastily concluded his charge, and turned to the jury, as the arbiters of Edith's fate. Calverley, among the rest, cast a look at the jury-box: and Black Jack, turning to his companions, proceeded, in the usual manner, to ask their opinions. Ten, after a minute's consultation, decided that the prisoner was guilty; but the eleventh, the stranger who had endeavoured to screen himself from observation, and whose changing aspect and agitation had betrayed the deep interest he took in the trial, positively refused to return a verdict of guilty. Black Jack cast an intimidating glance on the non-content, but he heeded him not; and as the jury-box, exposed to the eyes of the whole court, was not a place for further debate, the foreman declared, that as one of his brethren would not agree with the rest, they must withdraw.

When the jurors were closeted in their private room, Black Jack asked the galleyman the reasons of his refusal.

"There was no evidence to prove her guilt — I could not, on my conscience, say she was a murderess," returned the stranger, firmly.

"Conscience!" replied the foreman: "who ever heard a galleyman talk of conscience before? By the green wax! you forgot you had a conscience the day I first saw you. You recollect the court of *pié-poudré*, my conscientious dusty-foot, don't you?"

"Master Oakley, the thing is quite different," replied the galleyman. "To cheat a fool of a piece of coin, is what neither you nor I would think much about; but to rob a poor, helpless old woman of her life — to hang her up at a gallows, and then to bury her like a heathen, where four roads meet — no, no; that must not be."

The foreman's face assumed a deeper hue than usual: he looked fiercely at the galleyman, but there was a determination in the weather-beaten face that made him pause ere he spoke. "Galleyman," he at length said, "you knew the business before you came: if you be so fond of saving old witches' lives, why did n't you say so, that I might not now be in this dilemma?"

"You told me," returned the other, "she was a witch, and that she had killed the child. Now I know she is not a witch; and neither you nor any one here believes a word of the poisoning."

"You heard what the judge said," returned Oakley: "but, however, you are a sworn juryman, and here you must remain till you've brought your mind to bear upon the point."

"Aye, aye," said Harvey; "four-and-twenty

hours in this cold room, without meat or drink, will bring him to reason, I'll warrant you."

"Four-and-twenty days," said the stranger, in a voice so loud that the eleven started, "if I could live so long, shall never make me a murderer! No, no; you may go tell of the lushburgs, and hang me for a coiner," he said, starting suddenly up, and looking proudly at Black Jack; "but, by the holy well! you shall not make me hang the woman who nursed my mother, and prayed by her when every body else was afraid to go near her. She a witch!" he continued, with a bitter laugh—"by the holy well! if she had been so, she wouldn't have given the poor orphan a groat and a piece of bread, to come back, after ten years, to hang her at last! But this comes of carding and dicing, and sabbath-breaking. The fiend drives one on and on, till at last a man thinks nothing of murder itself."

"By the green wax! all this ranting is unprofitable. No one could call Black Jack an informer when his word was pledged," interrupted the foreman. "The affair of the lushburgs has passed away—it shall rest so, though I might pocket some good pieces by a breach of faith, which, after this obstinacy, would not detract much from my honour. This woman is nothing to us, and surely the judge, who is paid to hang criminals, knows more about the guilt or innocence than I or my eleven. He told us, as plainly as man could speak, that she deserved to be hanged. But, remember, galleyman, neither you nor I break our fast till our opinions are unanimous?" Black Jack winked at

his companions but the action was unnoticed by the stranger.

During this mock deliberation, Edith remained at the bar; but when the hour had passed away, and no probability appeared of an immediate verdict, she was directed by the judge to be taken back to prison until the jury had agreed.

It was nearly noon the next day, when the under-sheriff entered the room to ask if their opinions were yet unanimous. The galleyman still refused.

"My friend," said Manlove; "it matters little now whether you agree with your brethren or not, the woman is at this moment dying! The verdict is, therefore, of little moment to her — she can never be brought into court to receive judgment — guilty or innocent, the law can have nothing to do with her; but I would advise you to look to yourself, you will not be released till she is dead. Your brethren are accustomed to fasting, but you look ready to drop from your seat: and, if the woman linger many hours, you will certainly be guilty of *felo de se*."

With a little more persuasion and the most solemn assurances that the verdict could not possibly affect Edith, the galleyman at length reluctantly consented to agree with the eleven, and the foreman gave in the verdict of guilty.

"Let the prisoner be brought up for judgment?" said Skipwith to the officer in waiting.

"It is impossible, my lord — the woman is dying!"

"Dying!" repeated the judge, "yesterday she spoke with the voice of one who had years to live. Perhaps she wishes to defer the sentence, which she

well merits, by feigning illness. If she will not rise from her bed, bring her into court upon it!"

The officer departed, and shortly afterwards reappeared, and informed the judge that the Abbot of Gloucester was standing beside the prisoner and threatened to excommunicate the first who presumed to remove her.

"Does he? Does he dare think to evade justice thus — this subterfuge shall not avail!" exclaimed Skipwith with vehemence, and then musing an instant, he continued: "No, this subterfuge shall not avail—I will constitute the cell of the criminal a court of justice for this occasion. Officers of the Court proceed. I go to pronounce a just sentence:" and then, rising from the bench, and preceded by his officers, he departed to adopt the unprecedented course of passing sentence in a prison.

When the door of the dungeon was thrown open, Skipwith started at the unexpected sight he beheld; but, instantly recollecting himself, he walked on, determined to persevere. Edith was lying on her back upon the mattress, her eyes half opened, and the ghastly seal of death impressed on every feature. Margaret and her husband were kneeling on one side, and the Abbot Horton and Father John standing on the other. A lighted taper and a box of chrism, which the monk held in his hand, told that the last sacrament of the church had been administered — a sacrament that cannot be administered to a condemned criminal.

Holgrave suddenly rose from his knees and withdrew to the farthest corner of the cell. Margaret continued to kneel, and raised her burning eyes towards the judge with terrified astonishment.

The abbot turned pale with rage as he beheld the somewhat abashed Skipwith enter.

"What! impious man! Do you thirst so for innocent blood that you harass the last moments of the dying! Retire, or I curse thee — depart, ere I invoke heaven's wrath on thine head!"

"Insolent priest!" returned Skipwith, in a suppressed tone, as his look wandered from the abbot to the distorted features of the departing. "I come, not as an individual to harass, but as a judge to fulfil the law."

He then put on the black cap and slowly commenced the sentence. The life that had seemed to have departed from the still and contracted form, rallied for a moment — the eyes unclosed and fixed on the appalled countenance of Skipwith; and, when the concluding invocation of mercy for the soul of the criminal fell tremulously from the lips of the judge, she, in a voice low but distinct, answered "Amen!" and then a slight tremor and a faint gasp released the soul of Edith.

"The Lord will have mercy on her, vindictive judge," said the abbot, "though you had none; but she is now beyond your malice, and the glorified spirit will accuse you of this when —— "

A wild shriek from Margaret, and a smothered groan from Holgrave, interrupted the abbot. The judge turned silently away, and left the dungeon: and, as there was now no prisoner to confine, the door was left open after him.

CHAPTER VI.

On the evening succeeding the day of Edith's decease, Black Jack's associates were, as usual, squandering away their ill-got money at the Mitre. A ribald song' was just concluded, when a loud knock caught the attention of the foreman: the door was opened, and the galleyman entered. His countenance looked pale and haggard, and without speaking, he threw himself in a chair.

"What ails you, man?" inquired Black Jack — "you look the worse for your long fast — here, drink," handing him a full pitcher.

"I want no drink," said the galleyman, impatiently, pushing away the vessel — "but stay, 't will do me no harm."

He then snatched the pitcher and drank a full quart ere he removed it from his lips.

"Master Oakley," said he, "you played me false in this game. Do ye think if I hadn't been fool enough to believe what you and that master sheriff told me, I would have given in till poor Edith Holgrave had slipt her cable. Did you not swear to me," added he fiercely, "that the law could not touch her?"

"True, O king; and though the judge did a queer thing in her case, yet the woman died like a Christian in her bed after all."

"Is she *buried* like a Christian?" passionately interrogated the stranger. "No," he continued, in a quieter tone, "she was buried last night in the high road without kyste or shroud, or prayer, just as one would throw a dead dog overboard: but there is no use talking now — this is not what I came for. I came to ask if ye will give me a hand to get her out again."

"To dig up the old witch out of the grave!" inquired the foreman with a stare of astonishment. "To unearth a dead body! By the green wax! man, your long fast has touched your brain!"

"No," said the galleyman, gravely. "I am as sound and as sober as ever I was; and, mind you, (casting a quick glance round the table) I don't want any one to work for nothing — here, (he said, taking a small leathern purse from his pocket) is what will pay, and I shall be no niggard. You shall have money and drink too — speak! will you assist? There is no time to lose."

"What say you, brethren?" resumed the foreman, looking at the rest: "our friend served *us* — and besides, it is a pity to let good things go a-begging."

The brethren felt no great appetite for a job so much out of their way — and sundry hems! and awkward gesticulations expressed their reluctance.

"Suppose we do assist," drawled out Harvey and three or four others; "who is to remove the body?" the galleyman hastily answered,

"Leave it to me — I fear not the dead — though if the old woman started from the grave, she could owe me no good will. Would you lend a hand if this Calverley should bear down upon us?"

"Aye, aye," said Harvey, with some shew of courage; "we don't mind, unless the odds are against us, and in that case, you know, we must retreat."

"What!" said Black Jack, laughing, "think you squire Calverley would busy himself about the dead! Come, come, tell out the silver, and replenish the flagon: we are yours for this adventure — and, by the green wax! a strange one it is."

The sum agreed upon was paid; the liquor furnished and freely circulated; and the galleyman, now relieved from a weight that had oppressed him, gradually became cheerful.

It was about midnight when the party set out, well armed and muffled in large cloaks, and in less than two hours arrived within view of Winchcombe. Here, without entering the town, they turned into a lane branching off to the left, that led to Hailes Abbey, and down this avenue the galleyman piloted his companions. The way was narrow — at least two only could ride abreast — with a hedge on each side, and here and there the picturesque branches of a well-grown elm, displaying at this season (in the daylight) the soft green of the budding leaves. They had proceeded in silence about half a mile, when the galleyman suddenly paused.

"Yonder," he said, pointing to the end of the lane, "where you see the moonlight full on the ground — must be the place — at least it cannot

be far off, for there the roads meet. There is this lane and the road straight ahead to Hailes — then away to the right takes you to Sudley Castle and the other end of Winchcombe; and the road this way, elevating his left hand, leads on to Bishop's Cleave."

"But you have brought nothing to put the body in?"

"I brought a winding-sheet," replied the stranger; and when the grave is dug, and the coast clear, I'll wrap it round poor Edith, and lay her in my cloak — and ye will hold the corners."

"O yes," returned Black Jack; "we won't go from our promise. But where do you mean to take her?"

"To Hailes. — But when all is ready, I must go up the lane yonder," pointing to the right — "'tis but a step, and fetch Stephen Holgrave — and the poor fellow shall go with us to see his mother buried as she ought to be."

The party then dismounting, secured their horses to the hedge; and, concealing their faces by masks of parchment, smeared over with paint, proceeded to the end of the lane: but a sudden exclamation from the galleyman, who was a little in advance, arrested the steps of all.

The moon was standing round and bright in a sky gemmed with stars, and, as the rover had just said, her beams fell unshadowed upon the open space where the roads met; — and here, directly in the centre, two dark figures were revealed. One was kneeling, while the other stood erect, holding at arm's length a cross. The galleyman gasped for breath as he drew closer to his com-

panions, who, concealed in the shade of the hedge, looked eagerly at the objects of their alarm.

" Are they spirits ?" asked the stranger in a subdued and terrified tone.

" O yes, my brave heart !" said the foreman, with something of ridicule ; " they are spirits, but spirits in the flesh—like good wine in stout bottles."

" Aye, aye," said Harvey, encouraged by the unembarrassed manner of his leader ; " they are spirits I'll warrant, that can be laid by swords and staves instead of prayers !"

The galleyman breathed freer at this united testimony that he had nought to fear — for he feared none of this world ; — and as he still gazed, almost entirely relieved from his superstitious dread, he observed the extended arm of the upright figure gradually fall to his side, as if his prayer or invocation had ended, and he stooped as if addressing his companion ; but the latter still maintained his kneeling posture.

" It must be Stephen," said he, mentally ; " he is mourning over his mother. Comrades," he said, turning to the others, " it is but the woman's son : at any rate there are but two. I'll go and hail them ; and if ye see me stop, ye can come forward with the shovels." The galleyman went forward ; but the moment he left the shade, his figure caught the eyes of him who stood erect. He spoke to the other, who, instantly starting on his feet, prepared himself to meet the intruder. The stranger, nothing daunted, hurried on, and, in an instant, stood before those who, by the menacing attitude they assumed, evidently regarded him with no friendly feeling.

"It is no enemy bearing down upon you, friends," said the galleyman, in that tone of confidence which seems neither to suspect or purpose ill. "Tell me, is either of you the son of her who — who lies here?"

"Why ask you?" replied the taller figure, in a deep commanding voice.

"I will not answer till I am answered: but this I may say, be ye who ye will, that there is not a man I would befriend sooner than Stephen Holgrave."

"If you are a friend, I will trust you; and if not, I do not fear you," said Holgrave, raising the brim of a slouched hat that had shadowed his face — "I am Stephen Holgrave."

"Then may luck attend you," answered the galleyman, grasping his hand; "I thought it was you, and I came, not alone, for I have helpmates yonder to — to — do, what I thought would be a good turn for you — to bury your mother."

"It is an act of charity, stranger, to bury the dead," said father John courteously; "and you are calling down mercy upon your soul like that pious man of old ——"

"Aye, and I have need of mercy," returned the galleyman, "more need than he, whoever he was. But see, my mates are coming; — we must fall to work, for the night is wearing."

"But who may you be, stranger, who thus interest yourself for the injured?" asked the monk, "or why this disguise?"

"It is of no consequence who I am: and as to this mask, why! a man can work as well with it as without it."

The approach of Black Jack and three of the others (the fourth had been left with the horses) prevented any farther conversation; and, throwing aside their cloaks, the galleyman and the three jurors instantly commenced clearing the grave.

Holgrave drew the brim of his hat again over his face, and folding his arms, looked silently on as the work proceeded.

"By the green wax!" said Black Jack, approaching at this instant, "as I stood yonder, reconnoitring the ground, a man shewed his head behind that ruined wall!"

"'Tis the fiend Calverley, or one of his imps," exclaimed Holgrave, springing forward to the broken wall; but if any object had really presented itself, it had, in a singular manner, disappeared — for Holgrave, after a few minutes of anxious search, returned without having discovered the trace of a human being.

The body of Edith had been raised during his absence, and, with the winding-sheet wrapped around the clothes in which it had been laid in the earth, was just placed in the galleyman's cloak when Holgrave came up. An involuntary cry burst from the yeoman as he threw himself upon the ground beside the corpse, and, removing the cloth, passionately kissed the hands and the forehead.

"Stephen Holgrave," cried the monk, sternly, "where is thy fortitude? — you have broken your word. Has thy manhood left thee?"

"She was my mother!" said the mourner, rising.

When he had retired, the chasm was hastily filled up; and then Black Jack, the galleyman,

and two other jurors, took each a corner of the cloak, and, preceded by the monk, reciting in a low voice the prayers for the dead, and followed by Holgrave and the remaining jurors, leading the horses, proceeded at a quick pace to the church-yard of Hailes Abbey.

In little more than half an hour, they arrived at the meadow in which stood the parish church and the abbey of Hailes. The church, a small, plain Gothic building, with a red tiled roof, stood in the centre of a burial-ground, of dimensions adapted to the paucity of inhabitants in the parish. A low stone wall enclosed it, and some old beech-trees threw their shadows upon the mounds and the grave-stones that marked where "the rude fore-fathers of the hamlet" slept.

Father John went forward, and, pushing open a wooden gate, led the way to the osier-girt mound and head-stone over the grave of Holgrave's father. The body was deposited on the grass, and a space cleared of sufficient depth to receive it.

In the mean time, Holgrave had conducted those in charge of the horses to an old barn at a short distance, and then returned to the church-yard; and when the deceased was lowered into the grave, the yeoman knelt at the head, the galleyman and Harvey at each side, and Father John, standing at the foot, pronounced, in a low but audible voice, the prayers usual on interment. The moonbeams fell on the church, so as to cast a far shadow upon the ground that lay towards the abbey; the foot of the grave was within the shadow, so that Father John's figure was little revealed; and the branches of a tree (against whose broad trunk Black Jack

leant) concealed Harvey, and cast a trembling shadow upon that side; but the light streamed full upon Holgrave and upon the galleyman, who was kneeling at his right hand.

At this instant, an arrow whizzed past Holgrave, and struck fire from the opposite wall. The yeoman sprang upon his feet; another shaft was sped, but instead of the object for which it was intended, pierced the hat of the foreman.

"By the green wax!" cried Oakley, as he lifted the perforated hat from the grass, "we shall need more graves, if we stand here for marks. Come round, and stoop close to the wall, and the trees and grave-stones may ward off the shafts. If they will, let them come to close quarters."

"You counsel wisely, stranger," said the monk, passing round, and standing in the shadow of the tree on the left of Holgrave, whom he forced to retire and crouch like the rest.

As this was accomplished, a third shaft tore the bark from the tree; and in an instant after, Calverley, followed by some of his myrmidons, sprung down from an aperture of the wall.

"Sacrilege!" shouted he — "sacrilege! Take them, dead or alive!"

Holgrave rushed on the steward, and the clash of steel rang through the church-yard.

The assailants, however, were somewhat damped by a loud blast from the foreman's horn, which was instantly echoed by one of his men; and the tramping of horses in the direction of the gate increased the panic. The retainers of Sudley at length retreated more speedily than they had approached, pursued by the galleyman and Harvey,

who had burst from their concealment on perceiving them enter.

Byles, who was of the party, but had hitherto looked on as a spectator, (being determined to allow the steward and the yeoman to fight it out,) now glared fiercely around in search of an adversary. A cry from Calverley, however, drew him unwillingly to his assistance, and he sprang to the spot; but his uplifted arm was seized by a giant grasp, the axe wrenched from his hands, and himself hurled violently to the earth.

A strange sensation thrilled through the heart of the excited monk—an impulse to shed blood! The weapon of the prostrate Byles was snatched from the earth—it waved fiercely round his head; nature and religion warred, for an instant, in his bosom, but the latter triumphed: the weapon was flung to a distance; and Father John, crossing himself, disappeared among the tombs.

The combatants were as yet little hurt, for each was well skilled in the use of his weapon; but the steward, in endeavouring to ward off a blow that might have cleft his head, only succeeded at the sacrifice of his right ear, which was severed by the descending blade; and, ere he could recover this shock, Holgrave sprang within his guard, and wrenched the sword from his hand. A brief but fierce struggle ensued, in which Holgrave, at length, prevailed—the steward was thrown backward to the ground, and the next moment his enemy's hand was on his throat.

"Mer-c-c-y! mer-c-c-y! oh! mercy, Stephen Holgrave!" gasped he, as, with a despairing effort, he attempted to unloose the death-hold.

"Yes! mercy, Stephen—mercy to the coward!" exclaimed the galleyman; "he is not worth your vengeance."

"Mercy! he had little mercy for her," muttered Holgrave, bitterly, as he tightened his grasp.

At this moment, the voice of the monk was heard, as he rang the abbey bell, shouting "Murder! sacrilege! Ho! porter! murder!"

Holgrave, struck with awe, relinquished his hold, and Black Jack and his jurors instantly fled.

"Fly, knaves!" cried the galleyman, addressing Byles and Calverley, as he released the latter. "And now, meddling steward, if you attempt to interfere with her who is in that holy berth yonder, or injure the honest yeoman, her son, for this night's doings, the Lord have mercy upon you! Here, Stephen," (walking towards Holgrave, who had thrown himself beside the grave,) "up, and jump behind on my horse, for the cry of sacrilege will edge their brands, and friend or foe will have little chance. There—the abbey-gate is thrown open, and out they come with brand and torch."

"God speed you!" cried Holgrave, as the galleyman turned away, and grasped his hand: "God speed you! and reward you for this night: and if ever you or yours are in want of a friend, remember Stephen Holgrave." The galleyman hastily pressed the extended hand, and, springing to the gate, was in an instant on his horse, and galloping in the track of his companions, pursued, but in vain, by the arrows of the abbey retainers.

When Calverley saw his lord after this transaction, the scene, much to the amazement of the former, partook more of comedy than tragedy, for De

Boteler, when he saw the head of his esquire minus the ear, could not refrain from laughter.

"Meddling knave!" said he, "why did you interfere? The woman was dead—what more would you have? Did you understand it to be the custom of the lord of Sudley to war with dead enemies?"

This mortification only added fuel to the steward's wrath, and he determined to carry on, with all the vigour of soul and purse, an action which he had already commenced against his enemy.

Towards the end of June the sessions commenced at Gloucester, and Holgrave once more stood in the hall of justice—not as a looker on, but as an actor. Although, at the present period, the charge would have assumed a truly formidable shape, yet the deed was not then accounted even as *maihem*—for the simple reason, that the loss of an ear did not prevent a man from performing military duties.

But in this instance the offence was aggravated, at least in the eye of the law, by the manner and occasion. The law had not as yet contemplated the evasion of its decisions, by the disinterment of the bodies of criminals, and, consequently, there was no provision for punishing the deed. It was, however, taken into account in the verdict, and the damages were proportionably heavy. Holgrave, as may readily be imagined, had not a coin to meet the demand, and his crops, which had grown and flourished, as if by miracle — for they had been little indebted to his attention — were now condemned to be cut down, and put up for sale to pay the damages. The yeoman had often

looked upon his plentiful fields with a feeling of pleasure: not that his mind had latterly been in a mood to find pleasure in the prospect of gain; but his house and his land were mortgaged, (for his mother,) and even in the darkest and most troubled scene, there is a beauty, a redeeming brightness, encircling the domestic hearth, — nay, perhaps, the heart clings more closely to home, and treasures, more fondly, the little nameless pleasures, and even the cares and anxieties of domestic life, in proportion to the bleakness of the prospect without.

His farm itself was at length forfeited, and Holgrave took shelter for the moment at old Hartwell's. The hut his father had reared when he married his mother, was still standing; the roof had fallen in, the ivy had grown over its walls; but even yet it sometimes sheltered the wandering mendicant, and often would the blaze of a large wood fire look cheerily through the shattered casement and the broken door, and shed an air almost of comfort over the bare walls. Holgrave remembered the ruin, as he was considering where he could abide until Margaret, who was far advanced in the family way, should be enabled to travel farther. His resolution was instantly formed; and refusing the assistance offered by Hartwell, and some other neighbours, and as decidedly rejecting the idea they proposed, of striving to regain possession of his house, he requested Lucy Hartwell to look to Margaret for a day or two, while he sought out a place to shelter them; and then, without mentioning his purpose, quitted the house.

It was late in the afternoon ere Holgrave resolved to put the hut that had sheltered him when

a boy, in a state to receive him now; but there were several hours of daylight before him, and even when the day should close, the broad harvest moon would afford him light to prolong his labour. The rushes that grew by the Isborne, the clay from the little spot of ground attached to the hut, and the withered and broken branches that lay thickly strewn over the adjoining forest, gave him ample materials for his purpose.

Holgrave set about his task with that doggedness of purpose which persons of his disposition display when compelled to submit. His misfortunes had in some measure subdued a pride that could never be entirely extinguished;—it might be likened to a smothered fire, still burning, although diffusing neither heat nor light, but ready upon the slightest breath to burst forth in flame. Even here he was interrupted by a visitor.

"Good even, Stephen," said Wat Turner, the parish smith, in as kind a tone as his abrupt manner could assume; "you are hard at work, master —are you going to set the old cot to rights?"

Holgrave answered carelessly, and without looking at the smith, continued his work.

"I think you are doing well, Stephen, not to allow the idle vagabonds to house here any longer. By St. Nicholas! when these holes are stopped up, and the thatch is put to rights, and the casement whole, and a couple of hinges put to the door, it will be a place fit for any man. When I go home I will send my son Dick, and the knave Tom, to help you."

"You need not trouble yourself," replied Holgrave: "what I want to do I can do myself."

Turner looked at Holgrave, as if he meant to resent the unsociable manner in which the reply was uttered; but speedily recollecting himself —

"I can't blame you, Stephen," said he, "you have had enough to sour any man's temper; nevertheless, I shall send Dick if I can find him; and Tom is a famous hand at thatching, and I will step over myself in the morning with the hinges and a latch for the door. But harkee, Stephen, if you wish to keep your *own* house, only say the word, and myself, and one or two more, will beat the old miser and his men to powder, if they don't give it up again."

There was so much of good feeling in this rude speech, that Holgrave turned to the smith and grasped his hard hand.

"Hush! man," interrupted the smith, as his friend attempted to thank him; "say nothing for the present; only remember, if Wat Turner, or any belonging to him, can lend you a hand, just say the word, or come over to my forge and give me a nod, and we'll be with you in a twinkling."

One morning, about a month after this, Margaret had as usual prepared her husband's dinner. The frugal meal was spread by eleven o'clock, but Holgrave came not: twelve arrived, and then one, and two, and the dinner was still upon the table untasted. Margaret was first surprised and then alarmed, but when another hour had passed away, she started up with the intention of going to seek her husband. At this moment, Holgrave pushed open the door, and entering, threw himself upon a seat. There was a wildness in his eyes, and his face looked pale and

haggard. It occurred to Margaret, that he had probably partaken of some ale with a neighbour, and having neglected his customary meal, that the beverage had overcome him. However, he looked so strangely, that she forbore to question him. He bent forward, and resting his elbows on his knees, buried his face in his upraised hands, and sat thus, ruminating on something that Margaret's imagination arrayed in every guise that could torture or distress. At length he raised his head, and looking on his wife with more of sorrow than anger —

"I was right, Margaret," said he, "it *was* Calverley that set the usurer upon taking the land. He gave the miser something handsome, and John Byles is to have it upon an easy rent!"

"John Byles, Stephen?"

"Yes, Margaret," replied Holgrave, "John Byles is to have it; he told the smith so himself. But," he continued, sitting upright in his chair, and then starting upon his feet,—"does he think he shall *keep* it?"

Margaret shuddered, as she looked in his eyes.

That night, the freemen and serfs that dwelt on the estate of De Boteler, and even the inmates of the castle itself, were alarmed by the sudden glare of red flames rising in a bright column above the tallest trees, and so fiercely burned the flame, that in a few minutes the horizon was tinged with a ruddy glow. There was an eager rush to discover from whence the phenomenon arose, and many were the exclamations, and many the whispered surmises, when it was ascertained that the cottage was

on fire from which Holgrave had been so recently ejected.

Stephen stood at the door of his hut, looking with an air of derision on the vain efforts of the people to extinguish the flames; and Margaret wept as she saw the flames rising, and brightening, and consuming the house, which she still loved to look upon even now that it was for ever lost to *her*. The roof at length fell in, and myriads of burning particles sparkling like diamonds, showered for a moment in glittering beauty.

Holgrave was still looking on the conflagration that had in a great measure spent its fury, when Wat Turner came up to him, and applying a hearty smack on the shoulder —

" A famous house-warming for John Byles," said he. " By Saint Nicholas! I wish his furniture had been in to have made the fire burn brisker. 'Tis almost over now ; there it goes down, and then it comes up again, by fits and starts : 'tis a pity, too, to see the house which stood so snugly to-day, a black and smoky ruin to-morrow ; but better a ruin, than a false heart to enjoy it. By Saint Nicholas! 'twill give the old gossips talk for the whole week. Aye, 'tis all over now ; there will still be a spark and a puff now and then ; but there's nothing to see worth keeping the karles any longer from their beds, and I think it is time that we be in our's — so good night. But a word with you, Stephen ; — you did the business yourself this time without help ; but mind you, if ever Wat Turner can lend you a hand, you have only to say so — Good night."

"Good night," replied Holgrave, though without moving his eyes from the now darkly-smoking ruin; and there he stood with unchanging gaze till the sky had entirely lost its ruddy hue, and the smouldering embers of the cottage could no longer be distinguished; and then he entered his dwelling, and, closing the door, threw himself upon his bed — but not to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

An hour had not elapsed since Holgrave retired to bed, before the cottage door was burst open, and Calverley with a strong body of retainers entered, and arrested him for the felony.

The fourth day from his committal, happened to be a Court day of the manor, and it was selected for the trial, for the purpose of showing the tenantry what they might expect from the commission of an offence of such rare occurrence. The hall was thronged to suffocation; for many more were attracted by the expected trial, than by the familiar business of a manorial court, and the people beguiled the time till the entrance of De Boteler in commenting on the transaction.

"Silence!" was at length vociferated by a dozen court keepers, and Calverley was asked if he was ready to begin. The steward answered in the affirmative, and slowly read the indictment, during which, a profound silence was maintained throughout the hall.

"Are you guilty or not guilty?" asked Calverley

in a tone, the emotion of which even his almost perfect control of voice could not disguise.

"Thomas Calverley," replied Holgrave, firmly, "if you mean me to say whether I burned my cottage or not, I will tell these honest men (looking at the jury) that I did so. All here present, know the rest."

A buzz of disapprobation at this confession was heard, and the epithet "fool, fool," was faintly whispered, and then another loud cry of silence was shouted from the court keepers, as De Boteler appeared about to speak.

"You have heard his confession," said the baron. "See, steward, that he is sent to Gloucester, to receive sentence from the King's Judge when he goes the next assize. Record the verdict, and let the record be transmitted to the superior court."

Wat Turner, whose attention was anxiously fixed on the proceedings, now stept forward, and forcing his way till he stood opposite the Baron, demanded in a voice of mingled anger and supplication, "May I be heard, Baron De Boteler?"

"Be brief, Sir Blacksmith," replied the Baron, surprised at the abrupt question, "be brief with whatever you have to say."

"I was going to say, my Lord, that poor Stephen here has called nobody to speak to his good character, but may be it isn't wanting, for every man here, except one would go a hundred miles to say a good word for him—But my Lord, I was thinking how much money that house of Holgrave's cost in building—Let me see—about twenty florences, and then at a shilling a head from all of us here," looking round upon the yeomen, "would just

build it up again—I for one would not care about doing the smith's work at half price, and there's Denby the mason, and Cosgrave the carpenter, say they would do their work at the same rate—By St. Nicholas! (using his favorite oath) twelve florences would be more than enough—Well then my Lord, the business might be settled,"—and he paused as if debating whether he should go farther.

"And what then, impudent knave," asked the Baron,—"what is the drift of this long-winded discourse?"

"Why then, my Lord," replied Turner, "this matter settled, I and these vassals of yours here, would ask you to give this foolish man free warren again. We (mind your Lordship) going bail for his good bearing from this day forth, and—

The Baron reflecting that his dignity would be in some measure compromised by thus countenancing the Smith's rough eloquence, commanded him in a harsh tone to be silent, although it was evident from his altered looks, that his heart had felt the rude appeal. He beckoned Calverly to approach, and they remained for some moments in earnest discourse.

"Neighbours," said Turner in a whisper, "my Lord is softened. Let us cry out for pardon." And the hint was not long lost upon the people; in an instant a deafening cry of "Pardon, pardon for Stephen Holgrave!" resounded through the hall. The unexpected supplication startled the astonished De Boteler, and a loud threat marked his displeasure at the interruption. Silence was again shouted by the hall keepers.

"Prisoner," resumed De Boteler, assuming a

tone of severity, "you are forgiven; but upon this condition, that you renounce your freedom, and become my bondman."

"Become a bondman!" cried the smith, disappointed and mortified at the alternative: "Stephen, I would sooner die."

"Silence, knave!" said the baron; "let the man answer for himself."

"It was on this spot too," persisted the smith, "where, but two years ago, he did homage for the land you gave him: and by St. Nicholas, baron, boastful and proud was he of the gift; and if you heard him as I did, that same day, praying for blessings upon you, you could not now rive his bold heart so cruelly for all the cottages in England."

Pale as death, and with downcast eyes, Holgrave, in the meantime, stood trembling at the bar. His resolution to brave the worst, had, with a heart-wringing struggle, yielded to the yearnings of the father and the love of the husband. The bondmen pressed forward, and marked the change; but that scrutinizing gaze which he would so recently have repelled with a haughty rebuke, was now unheeded, and his eyes remained fixed on the ground to avoid contact with that degraded class with whom he was soon to be linked in brotherhood.

Just as the baron was about to put the dreaded interrogatory, to the surprise of all, father John entered the hall, and walked with a firm step towards the justice-seat. The monk had not visited the castle since his expulsion, and he had now no desire to stand again where his profession as a priest, and his pride as a man, had been subjected

to contumely; but the desire of aiding Holgrave in his defence, had overcome his resolution.

"What dost thou here, monk?" asked De Boteler, sternly, "after my orders that you should never more enter this hall."

"Baron de Boteler, I have not willingly obtruded myself. The duty of affording counsel to this unfortunate man impelled me to enter thus once again. Stephen Holgrave must choose the bondage, because he would live for his wife and his yet unborn child; but, ere he resigns his feeedom, he would stipulate for his offspring being exempt from the bond of slavery."

He ceased, and fixed his eyes anxiously on De Boteler, who seemed collecting a storm of anger to overwhelm the unwelcome suitor.

"Audacious monk!" said he at length, "this is thy own counsel — away, quit the hall, or — "

"Hold, Lord de Boteler," interrupted Father John, calmly; "the threat need not pass thy lips: I go; but before I depart I shall say, in spite of mortal tongue or mortal hand, that honor and true knighthood no longer preside in this hall, where four generations upheld them unsullied."

"Strike down the knave!" cried De Boteler, rising fiercely from his seat. "Drive him forth like a dog," continued he, as the monk, without quickening his pace, walked proudly away; but no hand responded to the baron's mandate. A cry arose of "Touch not the Lord's anointed," and the monk was permitted to depart as he came, unharmed.

"Now, sirrah," said the baron, whose anger was

aroused to the highest pitch; "say the word — is it death or bondage?".

Holgrave trembled; he cast a longing eager glance towards the door. Margaret was in the pains of labour, brought on by the shock she received on his arrest; and this it was that caused him to hesitate. His face brightened as he beheld the animated ruddy face of a serving boy, who breathlessly approached. He bent forward his head to catch the whispered intelligence that told him he was a father, and then, with a joy which he strove not to conceal, announced his selection in a single word — "bondage!"

"Then the child is born?" asked De Boteler.

"Yes, my lord, HE is free!"

Calverley's countenance displayed the mortification with which he received the intelligence, but presented the gospels to Holgrave in silence.

Notwithstanding the recent flush of pleasure which warmed the heart of the yeoman, his resolution appeared again to forsake him — he endeavoured to speak, but in vain — he appeared to be overwhelmed by a variety of contending emotions; but the stern voice of De Boteler aroused him, and in a choaked voice, he pronounced after Calverley the fealty of a bondman, holding his right hand over the book: —

"Hear you, my Lord de Boteler, that I, Stephen Holgrave, from this day forth, unto you shall be true and faithful, and shall owe you fealty for the land which I may hold of you in villeinage, and shall be justified by you both in body and goods, so —— "

A loud blast of a horn accompanied with the

voices of men and the tramp of horses, interrupted the ceremony; and De Boteler, recollecting that his cousin Ralph de Beaumont, with other guests, were expected, turned to Calverley and ordered him to receive and conduct them to the hall.

"Stephen Holgrave, my lord, has not yet finished his fealty."

"What! do you dream of such things when my noble cousin and guests are waiting for our courtesy? Away! I shall attend to the matter myself."

Calverley reluctantly departed on his mission, cursing the interruption that prevented his enjoying the degradation of his rival, and the baron now inquired whether Holgrave had confessed himself his villein.

One of the retainers, who stood by, boldly answered, "He has, my lord; Master Calverley gave him the words;" and the baron perceiving Holgrave's hand still resting on the book, took it for granted; and then ordering the yeoman to be set at liberty, arose and advanced to meet his guests.

Holgrave too, retired; and though secretly rejoicing that, legally speaking, he was as free as when he entered the court, he yet felt bitterly that in the eye of the baron and the barony, he was as much a villein as if he had pronounced every letter, and sealed the declaration with the customary oath.

He returned home gloomy and discontented; and, as he stood by the bed of the pallid Margaret, and inquired of her health, there was nothing of the tender solicitude with which he used to address her, in his manner or in his voice.

"Thank God!" said Margaret faintly, as she

took his hand and pressed it to her lips; "thank God, that you have returned to me without hurt or harm."

"Without hurt or harm!" repeated Holgrave: "*she* would not have said so — oh! no, no, *she* would not have rejoiced to see me return thus; — but your soul is not like hers — if life is spared, it matters little to you that the spirit be crushed and broken: but Margaret, do not weep," he said, bending down to kiss the pale cheek, over which the tears his harsh language had called forth, were streaming fast. "Do not weep, I cannot bear your anguish now: I did not mean to speak unkindly — I love the gentleness of your spirit — you are dearer to my heart, Margaret, than even the freedom that was of higher price to me than the breath I drew!"

"Will you not look at the little babe?" said Margaret, anxious to turn the current of her husband's thoughts.

"Another time, Margaret — not now; but — the child was born before its father declared himself a wretch! and I will look upon it — poor little creature!" he continued, gazing at the babe as Margaret raised it up, "what a strange colour it is!"

"Yes," said Margaret, "and it is so cold! they think it will not live!"

"So much the better."

"Oh! don't say so, Stephen," replied Margaret, pressing the infant to her bosom; "I have prayed it might live, and I suppose it was only the fright that makes it so cold and discoloured."

"May be so," answered Holgrave; "but if your prayers be not heard, and the child dies——"

It seemed scarcely a human voice which had uttered the last words, so deep and hoarse was the sound, and there seemed more of threat, in the sudden pause, than if he had thundered out the wildest words. Margaret gave an involuntary shudder; and Holgrave, who was not so wrapped up in his own feelings, as to be wholly regardless of those of his wife, moved away from the bed, and sat apart, brooding over the dark thoughts that filled his breast.

On the second day after Holgrave had become a bondman, he was summoned by an order from Calverley to go to labour for his lord. His heart swelled as he sullenly obeyed the mandate, and Margaret trembled as she saw him depart. She looked anxiously for the close of the day; and, when she saw her husband enter with some vegetables and grain that had been apportioned to him for his day's toil, her heart was glad. It was true that the gloom on his brow seemed increased, and that he threw down his load, and sat for several minutes without speaking, — but she cared not for his silence as she saw him return in safety.

The next day he went to his task, and pursued his labour with sullen industry, but no approaches to familiarity would he permit in the companions of his toils. He still regarded himself as a free man; he knew not how distant the day of his release might be; but he resolved, if an opportunity ever did occur, that he should not let it pass.

He disdained the villeins, and he felt that the free men would disdain him. He would not as-

sociate with those now, whom, in his day of prosperity, he had sought to befriend, and whose degraded state he had wished to ameliorate; nor would he associate with those who had so lately been his compeers, lest they should seek to befriend him or ameliorate his lot.

One evening, about the eighth day after the birth of his infant, fatigued in body, and troubled in spirit (for Calverley had that day exercised to the full the commanding power with which he was invested), he entered the cottage, and found Margaret weeping over the little babe.

"Oh, Stephen," she said, "how I wished you would return — for our child is dying!"

"Great God!" cried Holgrave, rushing forward to look at the infant, — the feelings of the father overcoming every selfish consideration.

"Oh, see!" said Margaret, her voice almost choked with her sobs. "See how pale he looks! Look at his white lips! His breathing becomes faint! Oh, my child, my child!"

Margaret ceased to speak, and her tears dropped fast on the little innocent she was so anxiously watching; presently it gave a faint sigh, and the mother's agonizing shriek, told her husband that the breath was its last. Holgrave had beheld in silence the death-pang of his child; and now, when the cry of the mother announced that it had ceased to be, he turned from the bed and rushed to the door without uttering a word.

"Oh, Stephen, do not leave me!" exclaimed Margaret. "Oh! for mercy's sake, leave me not alone with my dead child!"

But Stephen heard her not; — indeed, he was

a few paces from the door ere she had finished the exclamation.

All without the cottage, as well as within, was darkness and gloom. Perhaps, if the beauty of moonlight had met his view, he might have turned sickening away to the sadness of his own abode; but as it was, the dreariness of the scene accorded with the feelings, which seemed bursting his heart, and he rushed on in the darkness heedless of the path he took. As if led by some instinct, he found himself upon the black ruins of his once happy home. No hand had touched the scattered, half-consumed materials, which had composed the dwelling; the black but substantial beams still lay as they had fallen. Perhaps, his was the first foot that pressed the spot since the night it blazed forth, a brilliant beacon, to warn the base-hearted what an injured man might dare. The fire had scathed the tree that had sheltered the cottage, but the seat he had raised beneath it yet remained entire. He sat down on the bench, and raised his eyes to the heavens; the wind came in sudden gusts, drifting the thick clouds across the sky; for a moment a solitary star would beam in the dark concave, and then another cloud would pass on, and the twinkling radiance would be lost. He gazed a few minutes on the clouded sky, and thought on all he had suffered and all he had lost: his last fond hope was now snatched away; and he cursed De Boteler, as at once the degrader of the father and destroyer of the child. But a strange feeling arose in his mind as a long hollow-sounding gust swept past him; it came from the ruin beside him — from the spot *he* had made deso-

late; and, as he looked wistfully round, he felt a sudden throbbing of his heart, and a quickened respiration. In a few minutes his indefinite terror became sufficiently powerful to neutralize every other sensation. He arose—he could not remain another instant; he could scarcely have passed the night there under the influence of his present feelings, had it even been the price of his freedom. He hurried down the path that led from the place where he had stood, and at every step his heart felt relieved; and, as the distance increased, his superstitious fears died away, and gradually gloom and sorrow possessed him as before.

As he walked on, choosing the most unfrequented paths, a sudden gleam of light startled him, till he recollected that Sudley castle stood before him; and, without bestowing a thought on the unusual number of tapers that were seen burning in various parts of the building, he pursued his way. But the sound of steps approached, and he stooped to conceal himself in the shade of a thicket, for he was not in a mood to talk, and, besides, he might now be subject to interrogatories as to his wandering about in the dark: he had before been accused as a deer-stealer, and why should he not be suspected now? The steps came from opposite directions; they met just before the bush where Holgrave had crouched; and a voice, that he recognised as a neighbour's, said,

"Holla! who is that? man or maid?—for, by the saints, there is no telling by this light."

"It is I, Phil Wingfield," replied one of the castle servitors: "my lady was took suddenly ill,

and is delivered; and I am going to Winchcombe for a priest to baptize the child."

"My lady was in the right not to make much stir about it: I suppose there's not one in the parish knows any thing of the matter. But what is it, Dick?"

"A bouncing boy, the wenches say. But I wish, Phil, you would come with me — I don't much like to be trudging this dark road by myself."

The man he addressed consented, and their steps were soon lost in the distance.

Holgrave raised himself erect as the men departed. Wild thoughts, such as he had never known before, rushed through his heart. It is dangerous to snatch from any man, even the lowest of the species, that which he values above every other thing. Be the thing what it may — be it grand or mean, base or beautiful, still the soul has clung to it, has treasured it up, has worshipped before it; and none but the bereaved can comprehend the desolation which the bereavement causes. Holgrave's idol was his freedom; it was the thing he had prized above all things else; it was the thing he had been taught to revere, even as the religion he professed. It must, therefore, have had a strong hold upon his feelings; it must have grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength: and this it is necessary to understand before a perfect idea can be formed of the hatred which he now felt towards the man who had wrested from him his treasure. It is true he might have rejected his terms, at the sacrifice of a thing

of less value — his life; but there was then love and hope to contend against him — the hope of a man and a father. But he had now no longer hope; it had fled with the spirit of his little babe; its last faint breath had dissipated all the illusions of far-off happiness; and he now looked forward to a life of degradation, and a death of dishonour.

"Can it be?" said Holgrave, as he looked before him at the castle, which the tapers revealed — "Can it be, that the lord of this castle and I are the sons of the same heavenly Father? Can the same God have created us? — and is his child to live and grow to manhood, that he may trample on his fellow men, as his father has trampled on me? Is this to go on from generation to generation, and the sons to become even worse than the fathers? — No!" said he, pausing; "I have no child — Margaret must forgive me — I have only a worthless life to forfeit." He paused again. "I *will* attempt it!" he said, vehemently — "he can but hang me; and if I succeed, the noble blood they think so much of may yet——" Holgrave suffered the sentence to remain unfinished, and he rushed towards the castle.

There was a wicket in the northern gate, the common outlet for the domestics, which, as Holgrave had anticipated, the servitor had not closed after him. He entered, and stood within the court-yard; he heard the sound of voices, and the tread of feet, but no human being was near: he paused an instant to consider, and then, with the swiftness of a deer, he sprung towards the stables, and entered the one appropriated to the select stud of the baron. A lamp was burning,

but the men who attended on the horses were now away, quaffing ale to the long life of the heir. The baroness's favourite palfrey was lying in a stall; he stept across the animal, and, after pressing his hands on various parts of the wall, a concealed door flew open, and a dark aperture was before him. He stooped and passed through, and ascended a long, winding flight of steps, till a door impeded his progress; he opened it, and stood in a closet hung round with dresses and mantles, and displaying all the graceful trifles of a lady's wardrobe. There was a door opposite the one at which he had entered, which led into the baroness's chamber, where there were lighted candles, and a blazing fire on the hearth. The floor was thickly strewn with rushes, and he could just perceive the high back of a chair, with the arms of the family wrought in the centre; he paused and listened; he heard the faint cry of a babe, and discovered, by the language of the nurse, that she was feeding it; then there was the hush-a-by, and the rocking motion of the attendant. In a few minutes, the sound of a foot on the rushes, and "the lovely babe would sleep," now announced to Holgrave that the child was deposited with its mother: then he heard the curtains of the bed drawn, and the nurse whisper some one to retire, as her ladyship was inclined to sleep; there was another step across the rushes, and a door was softly closed, and then for a few minutes an unbroken silence, which the nurse at length interrupted by muttering something about "whether the good father had come yet." Again there was a tread across the rushes, and the door again was gently closed; and

Holgrave, after a moment of intense listening, stepped from the closet, and entered the chamber. In an elevated alcove stood the bed of the baroness; the rich crimson hangings festooned with gold cord, the drapery tastefully fringed with gold, even to the summit, which was surmounted by a splendid coronet. Holgrave, unaccustomed to magnificence, was for a moment awed by the splendid furniture of the apartment — but it was only for a moment — and then the native strength of his soul spurned the gaudy trappings; he stepped lightly across the spacious chamber; he unloosed the rich curtains — the heir of De Boteler was reposing in a deep slumber on a downy pillow; beyond him lay the exhausted mother, her eyes closed, and the noble contour of her face presenting the repose of death. For an instant, Holgrave paused: remorse for the deed that he was about to do sent a sudden glow across his care-worn face — but had not the baron destroyed his offspring? whispered the tempting spirit. He raised the babe from the pillows without disturbing its slumber — he drew the curtains, and — he reached the stable in safety, closed the secret door, and arrived at the postern, which was still unfastened, passed through, and gained his own door without impediment.

"Margaret," said Holgrave, as he entered, put away that babe, whom your tears cannot restore to life. Here is one that will be wept for as much as yours.—Do you hear me, Margaret? lay your babe under the cover-lid, and take this one and strip it, quickly, and clothe it in the dress of your own infant."

"Stephen, what child is this?" her astonishment

for a moment overcoming her grief. "The saints preserve us! look at its dress — that mantle is as rich as the high priest's vestment on a festival. Oh! Stephen."

"Silence!" interrupted Holgrave, sternly; "take the babe and strip it and attend to it as a mother should attend to her own infant; and, mark me, it *is* your own! *your* child did not die! As you value *my* life, remember this."

There was a sternness in his tone that entirely awed Margaret. She continued to weep, but she took the strange infant and did as her husband desired her. The changing of its apparel made the little infant cry, but the change was soon effected, and then Margaret put it to her breast and hushed its cries. While this was doing, Holgrave had taken a spade and commenced digging up the earthen floor. The sight agonized the wretched Margaret, and when the task was finished and he approached the bed to consign the little corpse to its kindred earth, it was long ere even his stern remonstrance could prevail on the mother to relinquish her child. She kissed its white cheek and strained it to her convulsed bosom, and Holgrave had to struggle violently with his own feelings, that he too might not betray a similar emotion. But fortitude overcame the yearnings of a father; he forcibly took the babe from its mother's arms and laid it in the cavity he had prepared; and then, as the glittering mantle of the stolen child caught his eyes, he took a small iron box, in which Margaret kept the silks and the needles she had formerly used in her embroidery, and scattering the contents upon the ground, he forced in, in their stead, the different

articles the little stranger had worn, and fastening down the lid, laid it beside his child; and then, as swiftly as apprehension could urge, filled up the grave, and trod down the earth to give it the appearance it had worn previous to the interment. A chest was then placed over it, and it seemed to defy the scrutiny of man to detect the deed.

Holgrave's heart might have been wrung at thus interring his own child, but his face betrayed no such feeling; it wore only the same stern expression it had worn since the day of his bondage, and it was only in Margaret's swoln eyes and heaving breast that a stranger could have surmised that aught of such agonizing interest had occurred. The bondman then threw another faggot upon the hearth, and, in the same stern voice of a master, bidding his wife tend upon the babe as if it were her own, without a kind look or word, he ascended the ladder, and threw himself upon a few dried rushes in the loft above; where he lay brooding in sullen wretchedness over the wild and daring deed he had committed.

His meditations were soon disturbed by a confused distant noise—then men's voices and the tread of feet, and instantly the latch of the door was raised, the slight fastening gave way, and the intruders rushed into the room beneath.

"Are ye drawlatches or murderers?" asked Holgrave in a fierce voice, as he started up and sprung to the ladder, "that you break open a man's house at this hour?"

"If you attempt to come down that ladder, this fellow's glaive will answer you," said Calver-

ley, in a voice and with a look which the torch-light revealed, that told that his threat had meaning. He then cast a hasty glance around the apartment — for an instant, his eyes rested on the bed where lay the terror-stricken Margaret, who, at the first sound of his voice had concealed her face in the pillow. His eyes scarcely rested upon the bed ere he turned quickly to the men who attended him, and, in something of a hurried voice, desired them to examine the chest. What dark suspicion crossed his mind can scarcely be conceived, but Holgrave looked with a bitter smile upon the search as the men tore open the chest and scattered the contents in every direction. There was nothing else that required more than a cursory glance except the bed; Calverley did not look again towards it, and the men who were with him did only as they were ordered. At his command three men ascended the ladder, but ere they had advanced midway, Holgrave had grasped the end that rested on the entrance, and, in a voice that caused tremor in the craven heart of the steward, threatened to hurl them to the ground if they advanced another step.

"Do you think, meddling steward, that I have been in the chase again? Do you expect to find another buck?"

"Proceed — heed not this bondman's raving!"

Holgrave, conceiving that further resistance might awaken suspicion, folding his arms across his breast, suffered the men to ascend, and looked on in silence while they carefully examined the loft. But here, after a minute search, was found nothing to repay their trouble. They descended, and Calverley

said, "There is nothing here to *confirm* suspicion; but the son of Edith Holgrave is likely to be suspected when evil is done. We depart," he said to his followers, "but there shall be a watch kept on this fellow."

Holgrave looked contempt, and spoke defiance; but Calverley retired without seeming to heed either his looks or his words.

In the morning he went to his task at the usual hour, not however without again cautioning Margaret respecting the child. Soon after his departure Lucy Hartwell entered, to talk over the strange news she had just heard, and to offer her services to Margaret.

"How are you, Margaret? How is the babe?"

"The child is better," replied Margaret, "but I am very ill."

"I am sorry to hear that—I hardly thought that the child would live. Here, Margaret, take a little of this broth, it will do you good.—Oh, there are such strange doings at the castle! Yesterday evening. my lady was suddenly put to bed of a boy, and the child has been stolen away, nobody can tell how. Roberts, one of the castle guard men, told my father just now, that my lady had accused Sir Robert Beaumont, my lord's cousin, of stealing the child, and that Sir Robert is making ready to depart, vowing never to enter the castle again. But Martha, my lady's maid, said, in his hearing, that nothing but an evil spirit could have stolen it away. She declared that she saw old Sukey, the nurse, put the child safely beside my lady, and then, as her ladyship seemed inclined to sleep, she went from the bed-chamber

into the anti-room, and there she sat till the priest, who had come from Winchcombe, was ready for the baptism, and then she entered the chamber to tell the nurse; and when old Sukey went to the bed to take up the child, behold it was gone! Whereupon old Sukey gave such a dreadful scream, that the baroness started up, and discovering the loss of the child, could scarcely be kept in bed, and called the old nurse and every one who approached her, murderers; and then the whole castle was in an uproar, and my lady presently hearing the sound of Sir Robert's voice in the anti-room, shrieked that it was he who had stolen her child; and then she fell into such a fit of crying, that her heart sickened and she swooned away. But what ails you, Margaret, are you worse?" Margaret answered, faintly, that she wished to sleep;" and Lucy's humanity, overcoming her strong desire to speak of the strange event that had happened, she left her, after doing the little services the invalid required, to her repose.

Towards the close of the day, father John came to see his sister. "You are ill, my child," said the monk, as he drew a chair to the side of the bed, and gazed anxiously at her pallid cheek and swoln eyes. Margaret answered incoherently.

"Your child," continued he, "is it — is it still alive?"

"My child is well now!" said Margaret in a stifled voice.

"Well! Magaret, can it be possible! — Let me look at the babe, for I fear you must be deceiving yourself."

"It is sleeping," said Margaret; but the next

moment the babe, who had slept with short intermission during the day, awoke, and no soothing, no attentions of its nurse, could hush its cries. Margaret saw that the eyes of her brother were rivetted on the child, and she strove anxiously to conceal its face.

"It is strange!" said the monk, "yesterday, the low moaning sound it made, seemed to threaten immediate dissolution; and to-day, its lusty cries seem those of a healthy child — it is quiet now — give me the babe in my arms and let me look at it?"

Margaret did not immediately accede to his wish, and the monk looked at her with a strange inquisitiveness — something crossed his mind, but what could he suspect? He again asked Margaret, but she still hesitated. He started from his seat, and paced up and down the floor. He then stopped suddenly before the bed. Margaret had laid down the infant, and had covered it with the bed-clothes.

"Margaret," said the monk, fixing his eagle glance upon his sister, "that is not your child!"

"Hush! Hush! Oh! for the life of my husband, say not so!" The sternness of the monk's countenance gradually softened as he gazed upon his agonized sister, and, after the space of a minute he said, in a calm voice: —

"Fear not me. Margaret — fear not that I would add to the grief which has weighed on your heart, and paled your cheek, and dimmed your eye. Fear not that I would add one sorrow to the only being who attaches me to my kind, and who tells me I am not entirely alone! But, I ask you, Margaret, not as a servant of the High God, but as an only brother — as one who has loved

you as a father, and has watched over you from infancy even until now; I ask you to tell me what you know of that child?"

Margaret bent her head forward and covered her face with her hands, but made no reply. In vain the monk reiterated his request. In vain he exhorted her — in vain he assured her that no evil should befal her husband from whatever disclosure she might make. Margaret still hid her face and remained silent. Her silence discomposed the monk. He continued to gaze upon her with a troubled countenance. Anger for the cruelty that could premeditatedly deprive a mother of her offspring, and alarm for the consequences that might result to Holgrave, could have been read in his contracted brow and anxious glance. His sister's unwillingness to speak confirmed his suspicions, and he felt as fully convinced that the child that lay before him was the baron's son as if he himself had witnessed the theft.

"Margaret," said John, "your silence does but confirm my suspicions. It is a cruel revenge — but it is done — and Stephen's life shall never be put in jeopardy by a breath of mine. He has suffered, but till now he had not sinned! But his sin be between his conscience and his God: he paused for a minute, and then looking tenderly upon his sister, he said as gently as he could, "Farewell!" and being anxious to avoid an interview with Holgrave, abruptly departed.

THE BONDMAN.

BOOK II.

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CHAPTER I.

About a fortnight after the birth of the baron's son was the feast of All-hallows, and from All-hallows eve to the Purification of the Virgin, was little less than a continued festival. Mummers and maskers attired in fantastic habits, wearing garlands of holly and ivy on their heads, and bearing branches of the same in their hands, were to be met, dancing and singing along the roads that led to the castles of the barons, or to the broad beetling houses of those of a lesser degree. The castles, the manor-houses, and even the dwellings of those whom, one would think, could have no earthly object in view in their building but convenience, accorded little with, or rather was in direct opposition to, our present ideas of domestic comfort. The spaciousness of the apartments, lighted, perhaps, by a solitary window, whose small chequered

panes, encased in a heavy frame, and divided into three compartments by two solid beams, curved, and meeting at the top in a point, were rendered still more gloomy by the projecting buttresses of the windows above; but still the very construction of the buildings was favourable to hospitality. A dozen, or twenty, or thirty, or fifty persons, according to the rank of the host, might be accommodated, and not the slightest inconvenience felt. The more the merrier, was undoubtedly the adage then: guests were greeted, especially on winter nights, with a genuine hospitable welcome, because, although the capacious hearth looked snug and cheerful, there was a dreariness in the void beyond—in the undefined and distant shadows of the apartment—that could alone be dispelled by additional lights and smiling faces. It will consequently be a natural conclusion, that in the castles of the nobles, and in the houses of those immediately or progressively beneath them, the arrival of the merry mummers was hailed with almost childish delight.

In addition to this annual exhibition of mirthful mummery, the town of Winchcombe was enlivened by a fair, periodically held, on the festival of All-hallows. The fair-green lay just beyond the town, enclosed on one side by the town walls, and on the opposite by an abrupt, wooded hill. All Winchcombe was in a bustle; the ale-houses were crowded with visitors, and the streets filled with strangers; young artizans or yeomen were escorting their favourite damsels to the fair, to shew their gallantry by purchasing some of the various articles so temptingly displayed, as presents for the maid-

ens. Bodkins and fillets for the hair, and ribbons of every colour, except scarlet or crimson; and furs, principally cat-skin; and spices, and fine and coarse cloths of medley, and russets, and hoods, and mittens, and hose, were amongst the miscellaneous wares exhibited for sale.

But there was one stall that particularly attracted the eyes of the fair-folks, by the spices, silks, damasks, fine cloth, gold and silver cords and ornaments, furs, &c. it displayed. The owner of this stall was evidently a pedling Genoese merchant, or, as they were then called, galleymen. These foreigners generally bore a bad character — they were looked upon with suspicion; but, although suspected and disliked, they sold their merchandize, passed their base coin, and returned to Genoa to purchase, with English gold, fresh cargoes for Britain. They somehow or other sold their goods cheaper than the native dealers, and their coin, if even bad, would generally circulate through a few hands before it could be detected, and, consequently, those who purchased were seldom the losers.

The beauty and richness of the chief portions of their cargoes ensured them a demand from the superior classes; and if a noble, or courtly dame, or maiden, or knight, or even esquire, would not be seen bargaining personally with the foreigners, there were always officious agents who could transact the business, and have some trifle as an acknowledgment from the itinerant merchant. The galleyman, who was displaying his merchandize on the fair-green of Winchcombe, had, towards the close of the short gloomy day, disposed of a consi-

derable portion of his stock. The damsels of the ladies, residing in the vicinity, bought even more than they were ordered, so well were they pleased with the animated glance of the foreign merchant's black eyes, and with the pretty, almost intelligible, compliments he paid them; and, above all, with the smiling liberality with which he rewarded every purchase.

In the villages, the distinctions of dress created by law were pretty generally observed, but in the towns that law was as generally evaded: furs, and colours, and embroidery were worn by those who had no right to them, except the single one of purchase. In some instances, the law would take cognizance of the violation of its prohibitions; a fine would be imposed, but even this could not check the vain assumption; — there was no law to prevent people buying, and those who could purchase forbidden finery, would, in despite of penalties, contrive some means of wearing it. But to return to our foreign merchant.

There was now scarcely light to distinguish external objects, when a sudden rush was heard from the town, and, in an instant, a dozen persons surrounded the pedling merchant, and seizing him violently, while uttering threats and imprecations, dragged the dusty-foot to the court of Pie-powder.* As they were hauling him along, the crowd in-

* The court of Pie-powder *(pié-poudré)* was a court held at fairs for the redress of all grievances happening there — so called, because justice must be done before the dust goes off the plaintiff's or defendant's feet. See statute 17 Edward IV. chap. 2., confirming the common law usage of, and detailing some new regulations for, these courts.

creased, the fair was forsaken, all pressing eagerly forward to learn the fate of the unlucky pedlar. The galleyman seemed perfectly to comprehend the nature of his danger—not by the changing colour of his cheek, for that exhibited still the same glowing brown—but by the restless flash of his full black eyes, glancing before and around, as if looking for some chance of escape.

The court of Pie-powder was situated at the extremity of the fair-green, about twenty paces beyond the last stall: the court was a kind of tent, with a large, high-backed chair in the centre for the judge, a long table being placed before him, on which were balances and weights of various descriptions, to ascertain the truth of any charges that might be preferred against the sellers at the fair: there was also a smaller balance, a stone, and a small phial of liquid, to prove the weight and purity of any coin that might be doubted. At each extremity of the table was a bench, on which sat six men, to act as jurors. Although in a fair, the court was conducted with some attention to propriety; the clerk, who sat as judge, assumed as much importance as a dignitary of a higher tribunal; and, as the crowd approached, hallooing and vociferating, with the culprit, two men, who stood at the door with maces in their hands, prevented the rush of the people: and, by order of the judge, the accuser, the offender, and two witnesses were the only persons permitted to enter. The charge was laid; — the foreign dusty-foot was accused of defrauding the accuser's wife, one Martha Fuller, of the value of half a noble.

The *lushburgs* (as this base coin was called)

were then produced. The judge took the money, and was raising the phial to apply the test, when the accused, whose hands had been left at liberty, drew something from his breast, and threw it on the lamp which was burning before him. The lamp was extinguished; — a sudden explosion took place; burning fragments were scattered in every direction; a strange suffocating smell filled the tent, and nearly stifled the astonished spectators. Before they could recover from their surprize, the galleyman had knocked down the two witnesses, crept under the canvas of the tent, and, with the bound of a deer, reached the wooded hill that lay at a short distance behind.

The pause of astonishment was scarcely of a moment's duration; and then, like the hounds pursuing a hare that had broke cover, the whole multitude, uttering a wild shout, sprung after the flying stranger. The lightness of the galleyman's foot had often befriended him, upon occasions similar to the present, but now his bounding step seemed but of little advantage — for the foremost of the pursuers was as fleet as himself. There were few spirits more bold, more constitutionally brave, than this stranger's; — he had struggled with the world till he had learned to despise it; he had buffeted with the waves till he had deemed them harmless; and, up to the last five minutes, he would have sworn that there was neither a man nor a sea that he feared to meet. But the stranger had, at that time, no law in England; — the gallows-tree by torchlight, the execrations, the tumult, the sudden hurrying of the soul away without even a moment to call for mercy; — all this

was distinctly before the eyes of the fugitive. He had seen others act a part in such a scene, and his turn seemed now at hand; — and the galleyman almost groaned at the thought of dying unshrieved.

A large thicket, at this moment, gave the dusty foot an opportunity of doubling, and, for an instant, diverging from the straightforward course, though it availed him little, he seemed to feel the breath of his pursuer on the back of his neck; his foot sounded as if at his heels; he drew his garment closely around him, turned suddenly to the right, and, bounding from the ground, the next instant a splash was heard in the little river, and the fugitive was safe from his pursuer.

We before observed that Stephen Holgrave's dwelling was situated at a short distance from the little Eastbourne; and, on the night of All-hallows fair, a quick knocking was heard at the door just after Holgrave had retired to rest. Holgrave, concluding it was some mandate from the castle, arose, and, in a surly voice, demanded who was there?

"A stranger who wants a shelter — open the door."

It was instantly opened; and the galleyman, with his saturated garments, and his long black hair hanging dripping over his shoulders, entered the cottage.

"Why, what mishap has befallen you?" inquired Holgrave, in surprise.

"Ask no questions," answered the dusty-foot, "but give me a cup of malmsey."

"Malmsey! and in a villein's cottage," replied

Holgrave, bitterly. "No, no; but here is a small flask of sack which a neighbour brought to my wife: she will little grudge it to a man in your plight."

While Holgrave was speaking, he emptied the flask into a horn, and, handing it to the galleyman, the latter eagerly clutched it, and, with astonishing rapidity, swallowed the contents.

"Is that all you have?" inquired the dustyfoot.

"Yes," replied Holgrave; "and enough too, I think, for any reasonable man at one time."

"Nonsense!" returned the stranger, "I would drink ten times as much and be nothing the worse. But hark you, Stephen Holgrave — I have come to you for shelter, and I expect you will give it."

"While I have a roof the way-faring man shall never sleep ——"

"I do not talk of sleep," interrupted the stranger; "I would not trouble any man for the sake of a night's rest: but to be plain with you, my life is sought for — the hue and cry is even now after me; — so, if you mean to keep your word, give me some dry clothing, and hide me — anywhere."

Holgrave turned from the galleyman in silence, and, opening the large chest, took out his only spare clothing — a suit of medley; and, as he offered it to the stranger, he looked at him with an earnestness which attracted the attention of the galleyman.

"You do not know me?" asked the latter.

"No," replied Holgrave, "I cannot call your

face to mind; but surely I must have heard your voice before."

"May be you have; but that matters little; I know you are an honest man, and were I even your enemy, you would not betray me."

"No," said Holgrave, "I would betray no man; but I should not like to harbour — a man that had ——"

"Had what!" interrupted the galleyman, impatiently. "I wish I had never done worse than I have done this day, Holgrave; I have neither hurt nor harmed; I only gave a pretty little fair-going dame a Genoese piece instead of an English one."

"Ah! well," said Holgrave; "if she was fool enough to trust a dusty-foot, she must look to it. I care not what you did so long as you kept your hand from blood: so come up this way." He then took one of the branches that were still blazing on the hearth, and conducted the fugitive to the loft.

The stranger instantly divested himself of his wet apparel, and attired himself in Holgrave's yeoman's garb; and then, with the natural regret of one accustomed to traffic, he drew from a secret pocket of his wet doublet, a bag of coin, the wreck of his merchandize, and with a sigh for all he had lost, placed it in his bosom. His dagger was also stuck in his doublet, so that if necessity came, he might use it; and then attentively listening to Holgrave's directions, he threw himself upon a heap of rushes in a corner, and soon after his host had withdrawn to throw the tell-tale garments into the Isborne, he fell into the short, light slumbers of a seaman.

The first sound of a far-off shout instantly dispelled his sleep; he started on his feet, and as he became convinced it was really the hue and cry, he raised a small flap in the roof, as Holgrave had directed, and forcing himself through, slid down into a sort of rude garden at the back of the dwelling; then springing forward till he came to a dry well, he leapt, with a dauntless heart and sound limbs, ten feet below the surface of the earth.

The hue and cry passed on its noisy course without heeding the cottage; and about an hour after, Holgrave threw down a rope to the galleyman, who, with the agility of one accustomed to climb, sprung up the side of the well, and entered the cottage with his host.

"You can now go to the loft, and lie down again," said Holgrave; "but do not sleep too soundly; for if any one comes in to look for you, you must go to your old hiding-place. You see, stranger, that mine is not the best place you could have chosen; there is ill blood between me and the castle folks, and they will not let any chance slip to let me know that even this hut, poor as it is, is not my own, but must be entered and searched as they would the kennel of a dog. You know me, stranger, though I know nothing of you, except your voice. You called me by my name, and you addressed me as a yeoman — think you that I *am* a yeoman?"

"Yes," said the galleyman; "I knew you were a freeman, and I heard you were a yeoman."

"Yes, I was a freeman, and I was a yeoman; but I am now a — villein! Ay, stare — stare! I

live through it all. It was but the space of a moment — the drawing of a breath, that changed me from a man who dared look the heavens in the face, and close his door, if he listed, on even the baron himself, to a poor worm, that must crawl upon the earth, and has not even this (taking up a log of wood) that he can call his own. True, it was not my birthright, but I earned it, in sweat, in hunger, and cold, and I fought for it amidst swords and lances — and I sold it, like a traitor, for—her!" And he pointed, with a look of bitter reproach, to his wife.

The galleyman, for the first time, fixed his eyes upon Margaret, who was sitting, nursing her little charge within the recess of the chimney. She had latterly been accustomed to unkind language from her husband; but the bitterness with which he had now alluded to her before a stranger, brightened the delicacy of her complexion with a passing glow, and caused a sudden tear to tremble in her eye.

"And, by the good cargo I lost even now at Winchcombe," said the galleyman, after looking at her for a moment, "you could not have sold it to better advantage. Such a wife would make any man think little of her price. If you *have* made yourself a villein, is the world so small that there is no place but the manor of Sudley to live in? Come, come, let us talk like friends — we are not such strangers as you suppose."

"No," said Holgrave; "but I cannot think where we have met."

"Never mind that. As for me, I am not quite foundered, although I have left a cargo behind at Winchcombe that would have bought a dozen

bondmen's freedom. Come with me to London: I have part of a galley of my own there, and you may either stow away in some hole of the city, or slip your cable, and be off for Genoa, where I'll promise you as snug a birth as a man could wish for. Besides, there is your child—is it a boy?"

Margaret nodded assent.

"Yes, there is your boy—would you let him grow up a bondman?"

"No," said Holgrave. "Now you speak of the boy, I will not leave this place. Let him live and toil, and suffer, and ——"

"And if he was a headstrong boy, and felt one stroke of the lash," interrupted the galleyman, "would he not fly from the bondage, even to become a thing like me? Hark you, Holgrave," he continued, starting upon his feet, extending his right arm, and fixing his full black eyes on his face—"hark you, Holgrave! my father was as honest a man as ever drew the breath of heaven; and yet I trade and traffic in cheatery. My father's greatest oath was 'the saints defend us!' and he would not drink a second cup at one sitting; and yet there is not a holy name that I have not blasphemed every day for these nine years, and scarcely a day that I have not drunk more—more than my head could well carry. My father could not have slept if he had missed the shrovetide, and yet I have passed years, aye, and am likely to pass my life, without a single shrift. Yes, yes, he continued, dropping his arm, and sinking down upon his seat, I have done every thing but—murder"—(Margaret crossed herself)—"and scarcely can I clear myself even of that; and all because I was a bondman's

son! Yes, Holgrave, I know what bondage is; I know what it is to be buffetted and railed at, and threatened with the tumbrel. I never was lazy; but I hated to be driven. All men are not made alike; some are only fit to be slaves, while others are endowed by nature with a high, proud spirit — of such was your mother."

"My mother! what know you of her?"

"Never mind that," replied the galleyman; "but as for your mother, she was a good, and a holy woman; but I say she was proud! You are proud, or you would not think so much of being a villein. And is it not likely that your boy will be as proud as either?"

"If that child takes after his father," said Holgrave, "he will have pride enough."

"And if he has," returned the dusty-foot, "he cannot have a greater cause. It is all very well for the great,—it looks well upon them; and even the decent chapman and yeomen get little harm by it: but for the poor man to be proud; to have the swelling heart and the burning cheek — oh! it *is* a curse!" He raised his voice as he spoke, and then sinking it to a whisper, added — "and if it is a sin, surely it has its punishment."

As Holgrave looked at, and listened to the stranger, his heart warmed, and he forgot for a time his own selfish feelings; but the picture the galleyman had drawn, and which his own soul acknowledged to be too true, determined him not to accept his offer. The baron had earned for his son the curse of "the swelling heart and the burning cheek," and the lad should know the toils and sufferings of a bondman.

"We shall talk further," said Holgrave: "in the mean time, we must consult for your own safety. If your father was a villein of this barony, it is not likely that the old steward, or the new one — the fiend Calverley — should forget you; and ——"

"Tush, tush!" interrupted the galleyman; "if Stephen Holgrave has forgotten Robin Wells, how should Thomas Calverley remember him?"

"Robin Wells!" repeated Holgrave, with a long inquiring look. "No — you are safe! I hardly think the foul fiend himself would detect you. Now I call you to mind — your eyes and mouth are little Robin's — but the brown skin and the black hair ——"

"Aye," said the galleyman, "you marvel what has become of the red and white, and the short, thick, yellow curls. Oh, you landsmen know nothing of the wonders that sea-suns and sea-storms can work. To be sure, it never would entirely change yellow into black, — so, when I wanted to turn Genoese, I used a certain drug that made my eyes and hair look as if they belonged to the same master."

"Well," said Holgrave, looking at his guest with that kindly feeling that is ever called forth by unexpectedly beholding an acquaintance of earlier days — "well, how often my poor mother used to talk of you, and wonder how it fared with you. I remember well when you came to bid us good-bye."

"Aye, aye, so do I," said the young man, evidently agitated; "but — let us talk no more of it."

Holgrave, thinking that Wells was averse to being reminded of an unpleasant circumstance, spoke no more of the day when the orphan boy had gone forth into a strange world; but, counting upon the sympathy of the galleyman, he began to recount his mother's fate.

" Hold, hold," said Wells, starting up, and covering his eyes with his hands; " as you hope for mercy, say no more — I cannot bear it."

He then sprung up the ladder, and threw himself upon the heap of rushes.

The extreme agitation of Wells, although it surprized Holgrave, by no means displeased him; — be sympathy ever so extravagant, still, generally speaking, it is gratifying; and Holgrave, at that moment, would have laid down his life in defence of the man who could feel so keenly.

Nature had given the galleyman a good and a kind heart, but evil associates had done much, and dissipation still more, to demoralize his soul; yet his natural good qualities were not entirely uprooted: the good fruit would sometimes spring up, but it sprung up only to shew what the soil might have produced — it bloomed for an hour in beauty, and then was trodden underfoot, and defiled in the dust.

When Wells had sprung into the loft, accusing himself of the part he had taken in Edith's trial, and of the nefarious traffic which had placed him in the power of Black Jack, he vowed that, in future, his dealings should be strictly honest; that he would give a portion of his worldly goods to the poor; offer a certain sum to the Abbot of Gloucester for masses to be said for the soul of Edith,

and endeavour to make what atonement he could by befriending Holgrave. But in a few hours his feelings became less acute; and we believe all of his vow that he fulfilled was that of striving to aid Holgrave, and becoming, to a certain degree, honest in his dealings. The next day he began to feel that depression of spirits usually experienced by persons accustomed to stimulants. Several times was he tempted to go out and brave detection, — but a fear lest some of the fair-folks should recognize him, made him pause.

In the afternoon Lucy Hartwell came in to see Margaret, bringing some little gift, and asking how she fared. Wells could distinctly hear all that passed in the room below; and soon collected, from the conversation, that the visitor was the daughter of old Hartwell the ale-seller. He remembered her a pretty little girl when he had left the village — with hazel eyes twinkling and brightening like a star; with a step as light, and a form as delicate and graceful as the greenwood fairy to whom she used to be likened. Her voice had deepened a little, but it had still much of the sprightly animation of her childhood.

She kissed and admired the infant, inquired of Margaret's health, bade her hope for better days, and then proceeded to talk of affairs at the castle;— how the baroness still continued to weep and lament; and how De Boteler, ever since he had returned from London, had been almost distracted — one minute crying and raving that there was some traitor at the castle who had connived at the abduction of his child, and that he would discover him and hang him up without form of trial, — and

the next offering large rewards and free pardon to any one who could give the slightest information, even though they should have aided in the theft; — and once he even went so far as to promise pardon to the actual offender. As, of course, this strange occurrence had been a prolific source of speculation to the gossips, Lucy proceeded to detail a number of stories she had heard on the subject.

Although Wells took little interest in these details, yet he loved to listen to the sweet tones of a remembered voice; and, as the evening had begun to close in, and Lucy talked of returning home, he resolved to put faith in the good feelings and discretion of the maiden. In an instant he had leaped down the ladder and stood at her side.

Lucy gave a faint scream, and cast a look of astonishment at Margaret.

"It is only a stranger," said Margaret, answering to Lucy's glance, "whom Stephen has promised to shelter.—You need not fear."

"Fear!" repeated the galleyman, as he gazed on the beautiful features of the abashed Lucy; "what can such an angel have to fear? — and yet, by the saints! such a prize would tempt the honestest captain that ever commanded a vessel. Years have passed away since I last saw you; — you were then but a child. You have forgotten me — but in storm or in sunshine, never have I forgotten you: the first sound of your voice, when I was aloft there, made my heart beat — and I thought I would run all hazards and face you. But — you don't know who is talking to you — Do you?"

"No," replied Lucy, "I don't think I ever saw you before."

"Oh yes, but you did; — don't you remember one Robin Wells, a stout rosy boy with curly hair, that made you a wreath of holly and ivy — one All-hallows day — and put it on your head, and called you a little queen? You were ten years old that day, and it is just ten years and three days since then. Don't you remember it?"

"Yes," said Lucy, blushing deeply, and half raising her bright eyes to see if she could identify the stranger with the boy who used to pluck fruits and flowers for her, and make garlands for her hair; but the fixed gaze of the galleyman compelled her to withdraw her inquisitive glance, and then there was a moment of silence, during which Lucy's burning cheeks told she was conscious the stranger's eyes were still regarding her. But her embarrassment was far from very painful; — there was something so gratifying, especially to a warm-hearted girl, to be remembered for so many years by one whom she had herself forgotten — for poor Lucy never once suspected the truth of what Wells had asserted!

"You are changed, Lucy;" said the galleyman, in a meditative tone, "and so am I; but a quiet home has reared you into loveliness; while cold, heat, and storms, have made me what I am. It was that ivy wreath of yours that made me a wanderer — I spent a couple of hours gathering and making it, and they promised me a flogging for idling, and so, after putting the crown on your head I set off, and here I am again after ten years, looking old enough to be your father — but, hark

you, maiden — sailors are thirsty souls, and here have I been laid up these two days, without tasting a drop of any thing stronger than — ha! ha! — milk! Your father has plenty of stout ale, and I'm sure such a little angel as you will have the charity to bring a flagon to a poor seaman adrift."

Lucy, glad to escape from the gaze of the galleyman, and also pleased at an opportunity of showing kindness to an old acquaintance, instantly arose, promising to return in a few minutes with some ale.

"But, take care," said Margaret, "that you say not whom it is for."

Lucy promised to be circumspect, and in less than ten minutes placed a flagon of her father's best ale before the galleyman, and then bounding away with a light laugh, as Wells sprang forward to pay for it with a kiss, her little form was instantly lost in the darkness of the evening.

About an hour after nightfall the next evening, the galleyman prepared to depart from Holgrave's cottage: repeatedly did he urge his host to accept his offer, and with his wife and the little babe remove for ever from a spot where his proud spirit had suffered such wrong; but Holgrave steadily refused; and the galleyman, having forced Margaret to accept two pieces of gold, went forth from the roof that had sheltered him. Holgrave's dwelling, as the reader already knows, stood upon an eminence apart from the congregated dwellings that were styled the village. The only object Wells could discover as he looked around, was the glimmering of the lights in the adjoining habitations.

He remained stationary for an instant, while he looked across in the direction of Hartwell's house, and then, smiling an imaginary farewell to the pretty Lucy, with a quick step and a light heart, he walked away in the opposite direction.

All was silence as the galleyman proceeded; labour had ceased, the evening repast was made, and many of the inhabitants of the village had already retired to rest. The evening was clear and cold, and the firmament was radiant with stars, the moon being only a few days old. By some strange impulse, the man who had so often gazed upon the far-spread beauty of an ocean sky, stood still for a moment here; and, by as strange a conceit, the silvery semicircle above, as it seemed, even in the crowd of lesser lights, brought to his mind the ever-smiling beauty of Lucy Hartwell. The wanderer lingered for a space — then hesitated — then turned suddenly — and, in less than five minutes, he had pushed open the hatch of old Hartwell's door and had entered boldly.

There were no guests; a bright fire was blazing on the hearth, and the galleyman, throwing himself upon a bench in the chimney-corner, requested Hartwell, who was sitting on the opposite bench, to give him a jug of his best ale.

"Here, Lucy," shouted the old man, "bring a jug of the best."

Lucy obeyed the summons with alacrity, but, as she presented the beverage, a slight start and a sudden blush, told how much the appearance of Wells surprized her. The galleyman drank off the ale, and then, walking to the farther end of the kitchen, where Lucy stood. "Here, pretty

maiden," said he, in his usual loud and joyous tone, "fill it again;" and, as she turned to the cask to replenish the jug, he added, in a voice that met her ear alone: —

"Lucy, I must speak to you before I go." He took the replenished jug from the little maiden, and then resuming his seat, paid Hartwell for the ale, and began chatting upon the weather and the times; and, when the old man's attention was thoroughly engaged, Lucy took the opportunity of throwing a large hood over her head and slipping out unperceived by her father. The galleyman took the hint, and draining the jug and starting on his feet, declared he should enter Winchcombe in better spirits after such excellent ale; and then bidding good evening to the unsuspecting old man, hastened after Lucy.

About thirty paces in the rear of her father's house, was an old far-spreading oak, beneath whose branches stood Lucy awaiting him, who was even now, in her mind, to all intents and purposes a lover. As the dusty-foot looked around in the darkness, a whispered hist! decided his course, he sprung to the tree, and stooped to clasp the little form in his arms, and to imprint on the glowing cheek his first kiss; but Lucy drew back, and, with the dignity of a maiden, repelled the freedom.

"Nay," said Wells, "you know I am slipping my cable, and you shouldn't grudge a parting salute; but, however, don't stand aloof — I give you the word of a sailor—I cannot say of an honest one, but that's nothing — one man's word is as good as another's if he means to keep it, and so I give you

my word that I will not offend again, and now give me your hand, and I will trust my secret to a sinless maiden."

"Alas!" said Lucy, "I am not sinless."

"May be not so, entirely, yet I am sure you are as sinless as woman can be — but listen to me, Lucy — you know that I am a bondman's son — that I fled from bondage — and that ten years of roving freedom, had not made me free. All this you know, but you do not know that I am the Genoese galleyman who cheated the chapman's dame at the fair of Winchcombe."

Lucy started, and made an involuntary effort to withdraw the hand that Wells had taken; but he held it firmly, while he added,

"I need not have told you this, but I would not deceive you — I have led a wild sort of a life, and I used to laugh at it; but somehow, since I have beheld the place of my boyhood, I would give back all the lawless freedom of the seas, and all the money-making traffic of the land, to be what I was when I left this spot — but this is all foolish talking; what is past is gone and cannot be helped."

"Aye," interrupted Lucy, "but you can help what is to come."

"Yes, and so I will; but you know I have neither home nor kin. Now one doesn't like to stand alone in the world like a deserted wreck in the midst of the ocean — nobody caring a straw whether it sinks or swims. I think I should not have done as I have done if I had thought any heart would have grieved to hear I was not steering right."

Wells paused a moment, and then added —

"I have seen blue eyes and black eyes — fair skins — and dark skins, but I never saw a she of them I cared to look upon the second time; but I couldn't have sheered off this night without a parting look at you, if the whole hue and cry of Winchcombe had stood to meet me. You've never been to sea, Lucy, and so you cannot tell how it cheers a man to think of the port his vessel is steering to — to look across the heaving billows and to see, even in his fancy, the snug harbour where he is, at length, to cast his anchor. Now, maiden," continued Wells, pressing within his own hard palms the little hand he held, "now tell me, shall not the wandering seaman look across the ocean to a sure anchorage. May he not think of a haven where he may at last moor his tossed-about galley?"

Lucy was little used to the figurative language of a sailor, yet she easily interpreted his meaning; and, after much hesitation, a little blushing, many promises of amendment — and many more protestations of unchanging love, she plighted her troth, and the galleyman departed on his journey.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning, any one ignorant of the interest thrown around Holgrave, would have been much surprised at the extraordinary sensation created in the barony of Sudley, by a report which went abroad of the flight of the bondman. The sun had risen pretty high ere any suspicion arose that Holgrave had broken his bonds. On the previous Saturday, Calverley had ordered him to commence his next week's labor with plowing a certain field; and about two hours before noon, the steward took occasion to pass the field, in order to ascertain how Holgrave was getting on with his task; but to his surprise, however, the ground presented the same unbroken surface it had worn on the previous week; and after some fruitless enquiries after the contumacious serf, he at length repaired to his hut, which he found secured. The door was then forced with little ceremony, and the hearth was found cold, and the cottage deserted. The bed, the chest, the stools, &c. stood as heretofore; and it was but the business of a moment for the steward to glance around the apartment;

to raise the lid of the chest; to spring up into the loft; to descend, and leave the cottage, and close the door as before.

Calverley had no sooner assured himself of the flight of the bondman, than he dispatched a messenger to assemble the vassals for the purpose of carrying the hue and cry in different directions; and he then entered the castle to inform De Boteler of the event.

Isabella grew pale as she listened; for by some strange instinct she had so connected Holgrave with the abduction of her child, that his flight seemed now to have wrested from her her last hope.

"Send forth the hue and cry," said De Boteler. "Scour the country till the knave be found, and promise a noble to him who discovers the runaway."

"The vassals have been collected, my lord, and John Byles is now sending them off by different routes."

"It is well," replied De Boteler; "but can you learn no certain tidings of his course?" Calverley answered, that the only intelligence he had yet obtained, was, that Holgrave had been seen at dusk on the previous evening, standing at his door, talking to his wife's brother.

"What! the audacious monk who thrice entered this castle to insult its lord?"

"Steward," said Isabella, turning quickly to Calverley, "see that the vassals have obeyed your orders. Remember, the varlet *must* be found!" And, as Calverley withdrew, she said to De Boteler with a thrill of apprehension, "Roland, do you

not remember the words of the monk when our first darling was lying a corpse? '*The blight has fallen on the blossom — beware of the tree!*'" De Boteler's countenance changed while she spoke, from anger to thoughtfulness.

"It is strange, Isabella, that suspicion never fell upon the monk! He is more artful than the knave Holgrave; and out of revenge for the church being defeated, might have ——"

"No, no," interrupted the lady, "it was Holgrave who stole my child, although the monk, perhaps, counselled the deed. At all events, he knows of the bondman's flight."

"Yes, yes, there is little doubt of that: but how can we come at the truth? Sudbury still retains his wrath against us, and would oppose an arrest; and even could he be waylaid, and brought hither, he is stubborn, and might refuse to answer."

"I will write to the abbot," said Isabella.

"Write to Simon Sudbury!"

"Yes, De Boteler," continued the lady, "I will write to him, and try to soothe his humour. You think it a humiliation — I would humble myself to the meanest serf that tills your land, could I learn the fate of my child. The abbot may have power to draw from this monk what he would conceal from us; I will at least make the experiment." The lady then, though much against De Boteler's wish, penned an epistle to the abbot, in which concession and apologies were made, and a strong invitation conveyed, that he would honour Sudley castle by his presence. The parchment was then folded, and dispatched to the abbot.

Calverley, after seeing the last, lingering, vassal fairly beyond the bounds of Sudley, proceeded himself to search in the immediate vicinity of the castle; but at the close of the day returned without having obtained the slightest clue. The hue and cry was equally unsuccessful; and those engaged in the pursuit also returned, cursing Holgrave and the steward for giving them so much fruitless trouble. The idea now prevalent at the castle was, that Holgrave had concealed himself somewhere in the neighbourhood, till the vigilance of pursuit should relax, when he would attempt to effect his escape. Fresh orders were, therefore, issued, to search every house, free or bond, on the estate. Calverley himself superintended the scrutiny; questioned, menaced, nay, even entreated, but in vain; nobody could tell, except the smith, because nobody knew; and *he* would have preferred knocking Calverley on the head, and abiding the consequences, to betraying a man whom he had assisted thus effectually to elude detection.

The lady Isabella's application to the abbot had been attended with as little effect. Sudbury had met with readiness the overtures of reconciliation, and in accordance with her desire, had interrogated the monk; but Father John evaded his questions with a firmness which gave offence to his superior, and convinced De Boteler and his lady, that he knew much more than he chose to reveal. Spies were set about his path, but nothing was gained—nothing discovered to prove that any communication existed between the fugitive, Holgrave, and the obdurate ecclesiastic.

It was about a month subsequent to this, that one morning, as Turner was making the anvil ring with the ponderous strokes of his hammer, two retainers from the castle entered the shed, and delivered an order from De Boteler for his immediate attendance. Wat laid the hammer on the anvil, and, passing the back of his right hand across his forehead, to clear away the large drops that stood there, looked with a kind of smile at the men as he said,

"My lord wants me at the castle, does he?"

"Yes."

"But does my lord remember the last time I was there? He did n't want me *then* — he told me he should n't be counselled by such as *I*. There is no rent due, and I have done no wrong — and there can be no business for me at the castle."

"But, Turner," said the men, "we must not take this answer to the baron."

"Well, then," replied Wat, "tell him that Wat Turner says he has made a vow never to enter the hall of Sudley castle again; and if you don't take that answer, you get no other."

It was to no purpose that the retainers strove to persuade him to send a reply more respectfully worded. The smith, without heeding them, put the iron that had lost its heat into the embers, and ordered the man at the bellows to blow on: and the messengers, after waiting a few minutes, left the shed without obtaining another syllable. They, however, shortly returned, and with so peremptory a mandate, that the smith, not wishing, from prudential motives, to provoke hostility, threw down his hammer; and first making himself, as he said,

a little decent, proceeded with the retainers to Sudley castle.

Turner thus far complied with the baron's order —but not a foot would he step beyond the court-yard. He had vowed, he said, when Holgrave's freedom had been denied him, never to cross the threshold of the hall again; and without being absolved by a priest, he would not break his vow, even at King Edward's bidding. De Boteler, accustomed to implicit obedience, was much provoked at this obstinacy, and, as was natural, his first orders were to use force; but it instantly occurred, that no force could compel the smith to speak, and it would be to little purpose to have the man before him, if he refused to answer his interrogatories. The compulsory orders were therefore countermanded, and Calverley was desired to try what persuasion might effect; but De Boteler could not have chosen one less likely to influence the smith. The instant that Calverley strove to induce a compliance, Turner might be compared to a man who buttons up his pocket when some unprincipled applicant commences his petition for a loan—for not only was his resolution strengthened not to enter the hall, but he also determined not to answer any question that might be put to him, even should De Boteler condescend, like Edward to Llewellin, to come over to him. But De Boteler was so incensed that the stubborn artizan should presume to hold out even against solicitation, that, in all probability, he would not have troubled himself farther with one from whom there was so little satisfaction to be expected, had it not been for the remonstrances of the lady, who was instigated by Cal-

verley to have him interrogated respecting Holgrave's flight. In compliance, therefore, with her earnest desire, he condescended so far to humour the smith, as to retire into the adjoining apartment; and as Turner's vow had not extended beyond the hall, he had no longer a pretext for refusing to attend.

The frown was still on the baron's brow when Turner was introduced; but Isabella, veiling her displeasure under a smile of courtesy, said, with gentle condescension,

"It would be well, my good friend, if all men observed their vows as religiously as you do."

She paused. The smith bent his head in silence, and the lady proceeded—

"My lord has heard from the steward that you are an honest tenant, and has directed that any alteration you may require in your tenement shall be attended to, and that the field which lies at the back of your dwelling be added to it without additional rent; and, as it gives me pleasure to encourage the industrious, in any request you may make, my interest shall not be wanting. And now, honest man," added she, with even more suavity, "my lord has a question to ask—it is but a simple inquiry, and I feel assured that a person of such strict probity will not evade it—know you Stephen Holgrave's place of concealment?" As she put the interrogatory, she looked earnestly in the smith's face.

Turner was prepared for direct and haughty questions from the baron; but the covert and gentle manner of the lady rather disconcerted him: however, though he paused with a momentary em-

barrassment, yet, contrary to Isabella's expectation, he firmly, but with a kind of native propriety, replied —

"Noble lady, I *cannot* tell you where Stephen Holgrave is concealed."

"It is false, knave!" said De Boteler, who had listened with impatience to the persuasive address of his lady — "it is false! We are positively informed that you aided and abetted the flight of this bondman, and that you alone can give tidings of him."

It was in vain that the baroness cast on him a glance that said he had adopted a wrong course — it was in vain that his own better judgment whispered, that he ought to leave the management of the affair in the hands of her who could smile and sooth, when she had an object to attain, without the least violence to her feelings: his anger was set in motion, and it would have required an influence much stronger than the Lady Isabella's to have calmed its ebullition. Although De Boteler spoke so rudely, yet Turner was pleased that it was *he* whom he had now to contend with; and, looking doggedly at the angry baron, he said,

"My Lord de Boteler, boy or man, Wat Turner was never a knave, and — "

"My good man," said the lady, preventing the interruption she saw De Boteler was about to make — "my good man, my lord was informed that you were privy to the bondman's flight; and if you were so far (as you considered) his friend, I commend your prudent reserve—but I pledge my word that no harm is intended him: and if he clears his conduct to my lord's satisfaction, his

condition may be better than it has ever yet been ——"

"Isabella, make no promises," interrupted De Boteler — "parley not with such as he." And, striving to calm himself so as to speak dispassionately, he added, turning to the smith, "Walter Turner, you are acquainted with the spot that shelters Stephen Holgrave, and I insist that you instantly reveal it."

"And think you, my lord," said Turner, firmly, "that if Stephen Holgrave had told me of his hiding-place, Wat Turner would be the man to bring him back to his bondage? No, no! I never did any thing yet to be ashamed of."

"Do you know, blacksmith," interrupted the baron, still endeavouring to appear unruffled, "that you are not talking to one of your own class, but to one who has the will — aye, and the power — to compel a satisfactory reply? And I insist," he added, raising his voice, "that you tell me where the bondman abides!"

Isabella saw, by the undaunted look with which the smith regarded De Boteler, that no good would result from this interview; and as she could not, with propriety, interfere any further, she arose, and left the apartment.

"Do you hear me, varlet?" asked De Boteler, in a furious tone, as the smith delayed an answer.

"Why, my lord," answered Turner, with composure, "I told you before that if I knew where Holgrave was, I would not tell."

"Then you admit knowing where he is hidden?"

"It matters little, my lord, whether I do or

not," replied the smith, in something of a sullen tone; "whatever I know, I shall keep to myself."

"Say you so, knave?" returned the enraged baron; and then, turning to an attendant, he ordered that a few retainers should instantly attend.

During the moments that elapsed between the order and the appearance of the men, De Boteler threw himself back in his chair, and was apparently engaged in counting the number of studs in his glittering sword-hilt; and the smith (who, although he felt himself a freeman, yet, from a natural principle of deference, did not consider he was at liberty to depart until the baron had given him an intimation to that effect,) stood, with something of an embarrassed air, awaiting the permission, and the idea every instant crossing his mind whether this summoning of the retainers could have any reference to him. But his suspense was not of long duration — the retainers entered, and De Boteler, raising himself in his chair, said, pointing to Turner,

"Bear that man to the tumbrel — an hour or two there may teach him better manners!"

"Bear *me* to the tumbrel! ha, ha, ha," exclaimed the smith, with that indescribable kind of laugh, combining derision and defiance.

The retainers approached to execute the order. Turner glanced hastily around, but no weapon, or any portable article that might serve the purpose of one, was at hand: he, therefore, had only to step back a few paces, and to place himself in the best attitude of resistance he could.

"By saint Nicholas!" said he, pushing back the sleeves of his jerkin, and extending his long

sinewy arms, "the first man of ye that lays a finger on Wat Turner, had better have shrieved himself; for there is that in this hand (clenching his fist in the face of the man who was nearest, and speaking through his set teeth) — there is that in this hand will make ye remember!"

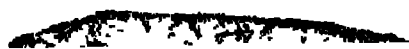
The men paused; — it could scarcely have been through fear, when four or five were opposed to one, even though that one looked at this moment rather formidable; but probably they waited for further orders, before making the apartment a scene of contention, and, perhaps, of mortal strife.

"Aye," resumed Wat, as he observed the hesitation of the retainers; "stand back, and I'll warrant ye I shall go quicker than the whole tribe of ye could drag me. This is no place for me, where, if a man doesn't tell what's in his mind, the halloo is given to the pack to put him in the — tumbrel! ha, ha, ha!" Taking advantage of their indecision, he had walked on to the door of the apartment while speaking, and his bitter derisive laugh was heard as he crossed the threshold.

"Follow him!" said De Boteler, in a voice that was reverberated from the high-carved roof, "and place him instantly in the tumbrel, if the whole force of the castle should be employed." But it was easier, however, to command than to enforce; the whole strength of the castle could not attack a single individual; and Wat, on leaving the apartment, had rushed through the doorway that separated the two court-yards, and, seizing a large splinter of wood that lay on the ground, now stood with his back against the wall of the stables.

Those to whom the command was addressed now encompassed the smith, who, with astonishing dexterity, warded off the blows that were aimed at his hands and arms to compel him to relinquish the stave. His hands were bleeding, and his arms swollen; but his heart was like the roused lion's, and, if unable to conquer his opponents (for the exertion of parrying prevented him from dealing blows), he would undoubtedly have at least tired their mettle, had not a stable boy, who saw the fray from a window above, mischievously flung down a quantity of chaff on his head. In the surprize and annoyance this created, the weapon was wrested from his relaxed grasp, and the retainers fastened on him like wolves. In the manual struggle which now succeeded, Turner was dragged towards the tumbrel; but, as it met his eyes, he seemed suddenly endowed with more than human strength. The retainers fell around him, either from blows or kicks, and blood streamed copiously. At length De Boteler (who would not permit steel to be used against an unarmed man), ashamed that so unequal a conflict should so long continue, ordered that, instead of the tumbrel, Turner should be conveyed to the keep. This, after much resistance, was effected, and a prison-door was, for the first time, locked on the intrepid smith.

The abbot of Winchcombe had now become a frequent guest at Sudley. The feelings enkindled by the detention of Edith, and the defiance of De Boteler had passed away and were forgotten. Expiatory presents had been made to the abbey, and a promise given that a gift of land should be added to its already ample endowments. Sud-



bury, as we have already related, had questioned the monk respecting Holgrave and the child, and, from the evasive replies returned, was strongly inclined to favour the opinion of Isabella, who now, that the application to the smith had failed, became more urgent that some compulsory measure should exact an unequivocal avowal from father John. The wishes of one so powerfully connected as the wife of the influential De Boteler, were, no doubt, of some weight with the abbot; but these certainly would not have influenced him so far as to induce him to adopt a conduct incompatible with the dignity of his character, had not father John been known of late to express strange opinions; and the monk, though poor and friendless, was one of those whose opinions somehow (it can scarcely be said why) appeared of consequence. It was true that, although but an illiterate bondman when he gained admission to the cloister, he was now, if not entirely, the most learned, undoubtedly the most talented and industrious within its walls: no monk transcribed so much, none was more devout, more strict in discipline, more attentive to the numerous and fatiguing duties of his situation as a secular monk in administering the sacraments, attending the sick, &c. But, though thus exemplary, strange things were said of him. He had been heard to declare, for instance, that villeinage was oppressive, and in every sense unjust; and that every villein was justified, whenever an opportunity offered, in escaping from bondage. These opinions, although not sufficiently heinous to have subjected him to ecclesiastical punishment, were yet considered sinful; — the

first as uncharitable, and the second as subversive of good order: and they induced Sudbury to act with more rigour than he would have been inclined to adopt had there been only the vague suspicions of the lady to urge his interference. Father John, therefore, was again questioned, and commanded, by his vow of obedience, to disclose the retreat of Holgrave, and reveal all he knew respecting the lost child: but threats availed not. In the midst of these adjurations, the abbot received a paper from a messenger, who burst breathless into the room, with the intelligence that the Lady Isabella had fallen down in a swoon in her own chamber.

While perusing this document, and more especially an enclosure it contained, he looked first amazed and then enraged, casting ever and anon a look of much meaning upon the monk, who stood cold and calm by his side.

"Read!" thundered the abbot suddenly, as, after a moment's hesitation, he thrust the parchment into the monk's hand. "This paper was found on the dressing-table of the baroness of Sudley!"

Father John read aloud as follows:—

"Thy child is not dead, but sleepeth. At thy bidding, he shall awaken, and make the desolate heart rejoice. Let Roland de Boteler, Baron of Sudley, swear, at the altar of Saint Peter's, that, on the day on which his lost child shall be restored, he will release for ever those whom, under the law of villeinage, he can claim as his property. Let him swear this, and, as the Lord liveth, the child shall be restored!"

"Now, what think you of this?" demanded the abbot, when he had finished.

"The sentiments," replied Father John, calmly, "resemble, in part, those that I have publicly avowed."

"And this is all!—you refuse explanation! you do not even deny the authorship! Are you not aware, that he who could obtain access to the chamber now must necessarily be considered the robber of the child?"

"And what is that to me?" coldly demanded the monk.

"Hence, sir! away, unworthy son of the church! away for the present — we shall soon find a means of bending your stubborn heart!"

Father John's situation from this period became every day more irksome. He was forbidden to approach the sacraments, and strictly interdicted from administering them. His brethren passed without noticing him, and he was not permitted to eat at the board common to all. A small table was set apart on which his bowl and platter stood, and hints were given that if his obstinacy continued, he would, ere long, be confined to his cell.

It was reported that the Lady Isabella had been in a state of great excitement from the moment of perusing the parchment — that she had urged De Boteler to make the required vow, alleging that if the contract was not fulfilled, the engagement would, of course, be void — and, it was added, that De Boteler himself, had at first, appeared disposed to comply; but, on further consideration, had resolved to wait till something further should transpire.

There lived, at this time, at the distance of nearly a mile beyond the town, a man named Giles Gray; and about ten years previous to the time of which we write, there were few round Winchcombe of whom it might with more reason be imagined that his days would pass amidst peace and plenty. Possessed of a farm, which, if not the most extensive in the parish, was well cultivated and fruitful, and sufficiently ample to place him among the class of respectable yeoman; with a little gentle wife, two fine rosy children, and an exuberance of animal spirits, he seemed placed above the chances of fortune. But his wife fell into a consumptive illness, which, rendering her incapable of attending to the domestic affairs, her sister, a pretty, active, young woman, kindly left her home, at Campden, to take charge of the family. In less than a twelvemonth the wife died, and Jane, the sister, still continued to superintend, and much was she praised for her management and for the attention she paid the little orphans. However, many months had not elapsed, ere strange whisperings went through the neighbourhood;—groups might be seen conversing earnestly together; — and, if it chanced that Gray's sister-in-law passed, every eye was turned up, and every head significantly shook, and Gray was at length compelled, in vindication of Jane, to produce a certificate, setting forth that they were married at St. Crypt's Church, in the city of Gloucester, about six months previously.

But it would have been better for Giles to have left his wife to the mercy of uncharitable whisperers than have adopted this mode of justification. The first intimation of his indiscretion was signified by

an order from the parish priest instantly to separate, and by public penance to merit absolution from the church. A month was allowed them. The four weeks elapsed, and the incorrigible pair were still living beneath the same roof; and, on the fifth Sunday, at St. Peter's, the parish church of Winchcombe, the congregation were assembled; the tapers lighted, and the missal opened. Some words were then said, acquainting the people with the crime of Giles and Jane, and cautioning them against holding any communication with such obdurate sinners. The bell was next rung—the book closed—the tapers were extinguished, and the incestuous pair pronounced accursed of God and man. This ceremony was performed thrice, and when the unfortunate Jane was seized with the pangs of child-birth, Gray, after having the doors of fifty houses shut in his face, as he implored assistance for his wife, was compelled to go to Campden, a distance of thirteen miles, to try what the force of nature might effect. There his application was not rejected; the aged mother, although her heart was breaking at the lost and degraded state of her youngest child, yet consented to accompany Gray; and disguising herself, that none might recognize her, hastened to Winchcombe.

Jane had been delivered of a dead child about two hours previous to the arrival of her mother, and lay, trembling and exhausted, in a January evening, without light or fire. A fever, with violent periodical shiverings, was the consequence. She slowly recovered; but the two little children, fondling over their sick mother, (as they called the unfortunate woman), caught the fever, and

in a few days, probably through want of care, expired.

Things had been getting worse and worse ever since. No labourer would work for them — no neighbour would purchase from, or sell them, any necessaries, and all the produce of Gray's individual industry was carried to Gloucester; for at the populous market of that city, he sold and bought without it being known that the ban of excommunication cut him off from all social intercourse with his kind.

It would have been still worse if Gray had rented his farm of one whose religious principles were more defined than De Boteler's; but even he, though he would not drive them from the soil, refused to take recompense for the small portion of land that the man himself could attend to, and even this portion, small as it was, presented little of the healthy and cultivated appearance that his broad fields had formerly exhibited. Sickness often came; and there was the enervating consciousness of being a shunned and solitary man. Then, too, there were domestic bitterness and mutual upbraidings and reproaches; and often did the once industrious and light-hearted Giles, instead of saving his hay or cutting down his slender crop, lie the whole day beneath the shadow of a tree, brooding in gloomy discontent over the dark prospect before him.

Father John, who, for obvious reasons, had not been forbidden to leave the abbey, was, one evening, in the course of a solitary walk, accosted by the wife of this man.

"Holy Father," said she, sinking on her knees

before him, and raising up a countenance which exhibited the traces of deep, mental suffering: "Holy Father, hear me?" This entire day, have I been watching for you.—Oh, do not leave me!" she continued in agony, as the monk, disengaging his habit from her grasp, with a shudder of disgust would have hurried on. "Oh! do not leave me?" she repeated, clinging to his dress. "Have I not heard, when it was permitted me to enter the house of prayer, that the Blessed Lord had suffered a sinful woman to kneel at his feet and wash them with her tears! Alas! she could not be as sinful as I, but"—she bent down her face upon her hands—

"Unhappy woman!" said the monk, in a tone that seemed to encourage her to proceed — "what would you of me?"

"Oh, father!" said she, raising up her eyes, that were filled with tears; "it is not for myself—it is for *him*."

Again the monk looked stern, and strove to loosen her hold, but she held with too firm a grasp to be shaken off, and the trembling diffidence of her speech changed into the eager and fervent supplication of one who would not be denied.

"Oh, father! he is dying — the death-sweats are upon him! and can I, who brought him into sin, see him die under the curse of God? Oh, mercy, holy father! have pity upon him! — his soul is repentant—indeed it is! We have vowed, if he should recover, to part for ever — oh, come to him!"

"I dare not—let me go! Is he not excommunicated? has he not lived on in sin? Let me go."

"Never! never!" replied the woman, with a convulsive scream. "No one but you dare I ask — and I will not leave my hold, unless you force me! You know not what is in the heart: even in the last hour there may be — there is mercy. Let him not die with the curse upon him — and, by all your hopes in this life, and by the blessedness that will gladden you hereafter, do not deny the last hope of the wretched!" The woman again bent down her head, as if exhausted by the intensity of her feelings.

Father John gazed upon her with a look of compassion; and, though aware of the danger he should incur, he said, after a short struggle:

"I will go. Can we measure the mercy of the Lord?"

"Will you?" said the rejoiced creature, starting on her feet, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven — "may the Lord grant the prayer that you pray!"

It so happened, that no one passed during this interview; and, as the monk followed the rapid steps of the woman, he often looked anxiously around, hoping he might not be observed.

As they entered the dwelling, a child came running forward to meet its mother: Father John shrunk from the little one, as if its touch would have been pollution, and approached the sick man. His dim eyes brightened as they fell upon the monk, and he strove to rise in his bed, but sank back on the pillow.

"Do not disturb yourself," said the father, in a soothing tone; and, as the wretched wife left the room, he prepared himself to listen to the dark

catalogue of long-growing crime. Father John exhorted and encouraged, and with all the fervour of his soul joined the dying man's prayer for mercy. It seemed as if the spirit had lingered for the parting consolations of religion; for scarcely were the last prayers said, ere a slight tremor was perceptible through the whole frame; the eyes fixed, the jaw fell, and the soul went forth to judgment.

Father John, rejoicing that he had listened to the woman's prayer, knelt a few minutes in earnest supplication for the departed, and then rose; but ere he left the cottage, he gently informed the unfortunate Jane of the event.

It would be a vain task to attempt a description of what followed — of the agony with which she threw herself by the bed, and kissed the cold hand and cold cheek, and upbraided herself as the cause of his sins, and sorrows, and early death; of the desolation that filled her heart as she looked on the dead, and felt that there was no one now, except the little child, with whom she dare claim affinity; of the feeling with which, on the following evening, assisted by a singularly charitable neighbour, she deposited the body of him she had loved, in an unhallowed grave, at the bottom of the garden, and went forth in the darkness of that night, with the child in her arms, to seek, as a wandering mendicant, the charity of strangers.

It is said, that charity covers a multitude of sins; but how often does an uncharitable spirit convert that into sin which may in reality be an act of benevolence; or, at worst, nothing more than the weakness of humanity? Father John's attention to the dying man was thus distorted. He was un-

fortunately perceived parleying with the woman, and followed to Gray's cottage, by a person employed to watch his motions. The information was instantly conveyed to Calverley; and as Father John left the cottage, he started at beholding two officers from the abbey, standing at a sufficient distance to avoid the contamination of the dwelling, but near enough to prevent the egress of any one without their observation. Concealment was impossible; so he stepped boldly forward, and with the brothers one on each side, proceeded in silence to the abbey, where he was instantly conducted to his cell, and the door closed and bolted upon him.

His heart swelled for an instant as the brothers retired; but the indignant flash presently passed from his eyes, and he rejoiced that no selfish consideration had prevented him from, as far as in him lay, saving the guilty soul of the deceased.

The next morning the monk was summoned before the abbot; and with the same calm and dignified demeanor that generally characterized him, he obeyed the summons. The two brethren who had conducted him from Gray's cottage, stood at the table, and the abbot proceeded to say, that upon the oath of a respectable witness, he had been observed conversing with an excommunicated woman, and accompanying her to her house, and that those two brethren (pointing to the officers) were ready to avow they had beheld him leave it. "Now," continued Sudbury, "what have you to say? Did you converse with the woman?"

"My lord," replied the monk, "I listened to her earnest prayers."

"Did you accompany her home?"

"I did, my lord."

"For what purpose?"

"To calm the last moments of a sinner."

"Did you not know that his crime had shut him out from the aid of religion?"

"Yes, my lord; but I was assured, that if he survived, their sinful intercourse would cease, and that by public penance they would strive to obtain forgiveness."

"Have you never heard of the fallacy of death-bed promises?" The monk was silent.

"Did you administer the sacrament of penance to the incestuous wretch?"

"I did, my lord," returned the monk firmly.

"A most obedient son of the church, truly," said the abbot (the calmness with which he had before spoken, changing into a quicker and harsher tone). You have read that obedience is better than sacrifice; and yet, though suspended from the exercise of the priestly functions, you have presumed of your own will to absolve a sinner, who, setting at nought the voice of the church, has lived in sin — a scandal to his neighbours, and a dreadful example of hardness of heart."

"My lord, I was unwilling that a soul should be lost ——"

"Rebellious son! Do you dare to justify your conduct? But this comes of admitting base blood to the privileges of the gentle. What better could be expected of a man who held your principles? Now hear me! You have sinned against the authority of the holy church, and violated your vow of obedience. You have also exhibited a most contumacious spirit in refusing to recant those

pernicious opinions you professed, and to answer the questions I before put to you. Retire now to your cell, and there remain solitary for eight days, that grace may have power to operate on your soul; and then, if you still remain incorrigible, you shall be degraded from your order. Retire," he added, waving his hand, and pointing to the officers to lead him away.

Father John raised his eyes as Sudbury repeated the threat of degradation. He had expected censure; but he was not prepared for this extremity of punishment; and the wounded feelings of a high spirit spoke in the silent glance he cast upon the abbot, as he turned proudly away, and followed his conductors to the cell.

In eight days he was again brought before Sudbury; but solitude had effected no change in his sentiments. Three days more were granted, and on the fourth, all the members of the community were assembled, and the monk was led from his cell to the chapel. There, in the presence of the brethren, he was once more asked whether he would publicly confess his fault in administering a sacrament to an excommunicated man, and profess his desire to perform public penance for the scandal he had given; and when he made no reply, he was asked if he would disclose the place of concealment of the bondman, Holgrave. To this, also, no reply was given; and finally he was promised, that if he knew aught of the stolen child of the Lord de Boteler, and would unreservedly declare all he knew—if he had not actually assisted in the abduction — all his past errors should be forgiven, in consideration of this act of justice. But Father

John knew, that although by a disclosure he might avert his own fate, yet he would assuredly draw down inevitable ruin on Holgrave, and that the hopes he had himself cherished — for the reader cannot be ignorant that it was he who was the author of the mysterious document—would utterly fall to the ground; and with that noble-mindedness, that would rather sacrifice self than betray the confidence of another, he still refused to answer.

Sudbury scarcely expected such firmness; and there was a minute or two of breathless excitation and profound silence through the chapel, as the abbot ordered two brothers to approach the obdurate monk, and strip off the habit he had rendered himself unworthy longer to wear.

Father John's lips grew pale and quivered; and there was a slight tremor perceptible through his whole frame, as the monks reluctantly proceeded to obey the command of their superior. His eyes were fixed upon the ground; he dared not raise them, for the chequers of the pavement seemed indistinct and trembling; and yet for twelve days he had been preparing himself to meet this catastrophe with firmness. The outer garments were removed; their place was supplied by a coarse woollen jerkin and cloak, and then the monk, for a moment resuming the energy that was more natural to his character than the subdued spirit he had as yet evinced, stood forth from the brothers who had been the unwilling instruments in the act of degradation, and fixing his eyes upon the abbot, who stood upon the topmost step of the altar, with his face turned towards the brotherhood, said in a

tone that filled the whole chapel—"My lord abbot, I shall appeal against this severity. It is not because I administered a sacrament to a sinner that I am thus degraded—it is because the Lord de Boteler desires to humble me—because he foolishly imagines, that a spirit conscious of its own strength would bend beneath injustice and oppression, that I am thus dealt with. But remember, my lord, that 'with what measure you mete to others, the same shall be meted to you again.'*" So saying, without waiting for the ceremony of being driven from the gates, he turned, and with a quick step left the abbey.

But here his firmness again forsook him;—he had stepped from his home—from the quiet seclusion that was endeared to him by years of residence and holy recollections, into a strange world, to struggle and contend—to sin, and be sinned against; and he leaned against the abbey wall with such a feeling of desolation as a child may be supposed to feel, as he bends over the grave of his last surviving parent. A few bitter drops of wounded pride, and deep regret, forced their way down his cheeks, and it was not until he became conscious that a group of persons of different ages and sexes were silently and sympathizingly gazing upon him, that it occurred to him he ought to remove to a less conspicuous situation.

CHAPTER III.



De Boteler and his lady, had left Sudley to be present at some festival in London, the day previous to that on which father John was degraded; but, from the firmness he had hitherto shown, the result was anticipated, and Calverley had received orders to arrest the monk on his being dismissed the abbey, and to confine him in the castle, until the baron's return.

The degraded priest proceeded slowly amidst the sympathizing crowd that attended his steps. Several times he stopped, with the intention of requesting the people to return home and leave him to pursue his journey as he might, but he could not collect that firmness of demeanor which had been wont to distinguish him; and ashamed further to betray his weakness, he each time passed on without uttering a word. They had cleared the town, and were crossing the bridge on the left, over the Isborn, when Calverley, and about half a dozen retainers well mounted, darted from the bridge into the high road. Four of the men, springing from their horses, surrounded

the monk and were about placing him on the back of one of the steeds, when the faculties, which had been for the moment chained by astonishment and indignation, burst forth with unexpected energy, and, with a form expanded to its full height, and an eye flashing fire, he shook off their rude grasp, and stepping back, demanded by what authority he was thus molested.

"By the authority of the Baron de Boteler," replied Calverley, as the monk fixed his eyes sternly upon him.

"It is false!" he replied, "no human law have I violated, and to no man's capricious tyranny will I submit."

"It becomes the bondman to speak thus of his lord," said Calverley with a sneer.

"I am not a bondman — nor is the Baron de Boteler my lord," said father John, in a deep, collected voice.

"O, I crave your pardon, good father," returned Calverley smiling; "I mistook you for one John Ball, the son of a bondman of this barony."

"My name is John Ball, and I have been the son of a bondman, insulting craven," replied the father, indignantly; — but I owe the Baron de Boteler no allegiance — you well know that the priest can be servant to none save he who created the bond and the free."

"And this is the habit of some new order, that is to be honored by being adopted by the unpriestly son of a bondman!" said Calverley, pointing, in derision, at the coarse woollen dress of the monk. Something burst from the lips of the latter, but it was lost in Calverley's sudden com-

mand to seize him. The men again approached, but the first who caught the monk's arm fell to the ground, stunned and bleeding.

Another succeeded, and met the same fate — then another, and another; — but at length, overpowered by numbers, the gallant priest was bound, and placed before one of the retainers on horseback.

There was now a simultaneous rush made to the bridge by the crowd, who stood watching the horsemen till they entered the castle; when they formed into groups, wondering at what they had just beheld — at what might be the fate of the monk, and at their own supineness in suffering half-a-dozen men, even though armed and mounted, to carry him off without a blow.

That evening, Wat Turner, who had been liberated from the keep, after a short confinement, was leaning on his folded arms, which rested for support on the sill of the aperture in his shed, that served the purpose of a window. The forge-fire had died away; the servitor and the journeyman had been dismissed; but Wat still lingered, as if he could there indulge his reflections more freely than in his own house. His eyes were bent on the ground, and so far was he lost in some waking dream, that, until his name was repeated in rather a loud tone, he was not conscious of any one's approach.

"Ah, Tom Merritt!" said the smith, raising his head and recognizing, in the dusk, a stout, active, young man, a mason, who resided at Winchcombe.

"Have you heard the news, Wat?" asked the mason.

"No—I have enough to think of, without troubling my head about news!"

"Aye, aye, true — but didn't you hear of father John?"

"Yes, I heard they dealt badly enough with him, because he would not betray poor Stephen — and for giving the sacrament to that unfortunate scape-grace. They told me he was to be turned from the abbey to-day, so I sent Dick with a few groats to help him on a little — but I don't know yet, whether the lad is come back, for I have not seen him."

"O, he is among the group that stands looking at the castle walls, I dare say," said Merritt. "Did you not hear he was thrown into prison?"

"What! my Dick," asked the smith, eagerly, starting up from his posture at the window, and his listless countenance suddenly becoming animated.

"No, no, not the boy," replied Merritt, rather impatiently.

"Oh," said the smith, again sinking upon the window frame; and then, as if perfectly comprehending what had been said, he added, as a bitter smile passed across his lips, "in prison did you say? What had he done that he should be caged? Refused to say where Stephen is hid?"

"May be so; but I can only tell you this—that when the poor monk was turned out of the abbey, Calverley seized upon him like a dog, or a thief."

"Calverley, the fiend!" interrupted the smith, fiercely. "If I could only give that beggar's vagabond a sample of what this hand could do, I think I should take a good night's rest — and

that's what I have not done since the night they gave *me* a lodging in the castle dungeon; and you say that Calverley has put him in prison? Now, I tell you what, Tom Merritt," continued Turner, "if there be a drop of man's blood in your body, they shan't keep him there."

"Will you help?" asked the young mason, eagerly.

"Will I help, man! Aye, that I will, with a good stomach — Why, if they shut up a dog that I cared for within those four stone walls, I would help him out! — But that monk is a holy man — and they think to frighten him as they thought to frighten me. Tom," added Turner, leaning through the aperture, and laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder, "I have never held up my head like a man since that night. To be set upon like a fox! To be dragged and hauled, and thrown into a prison — Tom! (grasping the arm of the other with a force that made him shrink) when I think of this in the day when I am at work, I throw down the hammer, for my blood boils, and I could not strike a sure blow for hours after, if a king's ransom was offered me. But, by St. Nicholas! 'tis little work that Wat Turner has done ever since — all has gone wrong — but I shall soon leave the parish altogether — and then, may be, things will go on better. For, here, if a man looks at me, it seems as if he would say, 'Turner, you have been in jail!' Tom Merritt, never boast or brag of anything!"

"Indeed, master Turner, I have as little as any man to brag of; for — if — it hadn't been for the watching and the advice of poor father John, my

old mother might have been this day hanging her head with shame, instead of looking up as bold as any of them, and saying, 'my son,' or 'my Tom,' as well as the best."

"That's all very well; but, Tom, as I just said, never boast. I used to brag that there never was a woman dishonest, nor a man a rogue, in my family; and that none of the name of Turner ever had a key turned upon them. And you see what it 's come to."

"Aye, aye, master Turner," replied Merritt (impatient of a long speech, yet knowing the smith's irascible temper too well to interrupt him,) I don't know what will come next! Here were you, who paid scot and lot, and cared for no one — see how you were treated! And now here is the holy father (with whom, though he got into disgrace at the Abbey, one would have thought, for the sake of their own souls, they wouldn't meddle,) dragged off like a common thief; and if we do not go to the rescue, the saints preserve us! who can tell if he will ever come out again? for there is none but poor Stephen akin to him."

"Enough! Tom Merritt, this is no place for an honest man. I was to have gone in a few days, but when this night's job is done, I shall just pack up all I can get together into a cart, and let the black fiend, or his imp, Calverley, take the rest. Aye! with my wife, the boy, and Will, I shall be out of Gloucester before sun-rise — and the sooner the better. But now let us talk of the rescue. How many honest hands can you get among the town's folk?"

"Why," replied Merritt, every mother's soul who could grasp an axe; but I have seen a dozen

lads who have sworn to free father John, or lose their lives. And knowing that you would give a helping hand, I told them so, though without your leave. We have provided paint for our faces. The retainers in the castle are few; and while myself and the men keep guard over them, you, as a smith, know best how to manage the lock of the keep."

"Give me your hand, for a brave fellow," answered Turner, grasping cordially the conceded member. "There are yet a few bold spirits in this manor. I shall seek them, and I'll warrant they will not leave Wat Turner in the lurch for this bout at least. And as for the lock, the foul fiend himself could not scheme or forge a spring that could keep me out for five minutes. Have your friends together in the field at the back of the town. The nights are dark now; and when I hear the clock strike eight, I shall be with you with all the hands I can gather."

Merritt presently departed; and at eight the two confederates again met. Soon a compact and resolute body of more than twenty men slowly and cautiously proceeded to the castle, and, in double file, ensconced themselves close to the walls, and so contiguous to the gate of usual egress as to be ready to rush in at the first opening. They had stood thus, scarcely drawing breath, for about half an hour; and Merritt, who, with the smith, was at the head of the little band, was about to propose that they should attempt to force an entrance, when the gate opened, and John Byles, who had been engaged upon some business with Calverley, unsuspectingly issued forth.

The smith caught him in his iron grasp ere he closed the gate, and, placing his broad hand over his mouth, held him till a bandage could be properly fastened; then flinging him on the ground, secured him hand and foot, bound him to a tree at a few steps distant, and, with the two men who had assisted, rushed after Merritt and the others, who were by this time in the court-yard.

No sound escaped them, and it was only the quick footsteps on the pavement that attracted attention. But ere the alarm was given, the intruders had reached the keep. The smith, with astonishing celerity, picked the huge lock of the lower dungeon, in which, by virtue of former experience, he imagined the father was confined; and beheld, by a torch, which they had now lighted, what fired even the most sluggish soul among them. The monk lay stretched on the groud, nearly divested of covering, with his arms and legs drawn by cords attached to iron rings in the four corners of the cell, and with iron weights pressing upon his chest.

"By St. Nicholas!" said the smith, as he stooped to remove the pressure, while the tears started to his eyes, "this is too bad. 'Tis enough to make a heathen sick to see a christian man served in this manner. Here, father John, (assisting him to rise) take my jerkin, and wrap this about you (snatching a cloak from the shoulders of one of the men). And now, good father, tell me who did this?"

But the exhausting punishment he had endured for above four hours, together with the cold that penetrated his whole frame, from lying so long exposed on the damp earth, so much impeded his speech, that he could not utter an intelligible word.

"And thus they could serve the Lord's anointed!" said Turner, compassionately, as he looked on the livid and swollen face and trembling limbs of him, whom he had ever, till now, seen with the beauty of holiness giving dignity to his fine countenance, and with the vigour of manhood exhibited in every motion of his muscular form. "Hark!" added the smith, starting — "there is a scuffle outside! Tom Merritt will have enough of them." For an instant he paused, and then, snatching up one of the cords that had tied the monk, he severed it with his axe from the ring in the wall, and passing one end round the monk's arm, fastened the other round his own waist. "Now you will have no trouble in holding by me — keep close. Here, father, could you not hold this? it might keep off some scurvy knave," drawing a sharp wood-knife from his belt, and placing it in the monk's tremulous hand. Turner then ordering the few who were with him to cover the retreat, to keep compact as they followed, and to strike at all within reach, with a keen-edged battle-axe in his right hand, and a formidable club, pointed with steel and firmly bound with iron, in his left, he hurried from the dungeon.

Turner had not been above five minutes in releasing the monk; but, when he came to the entrance of the keep, Merritt and the remainder of the band were sharply engaged with the domestics and the few tenants who kept guard about the castle. The smith pushed on with the monk; passed Merritt and the others, who closed in his rear; and, with that boldness, which often effects what more prudent courage would fail to accomplish, rushed into the midst of the assailants,

brandishing his weapons, and shouting defiance at the top of his stentorian lungs.

"Stand aside, ye graceless carles! Shame to ye, cursed cravens, to serve a christian priest like an infidel! Stand back, or, by St. Nicholas! you will never die on your beds!" dealing sturdy blows as he spoke, and pressing forward to a postern beside the principal gate which was not many paces from the keep.

"'Tis the smith! — 'tis Wat Turner," shouted a dozen voices.

"Aye, it is Wat Turner," swinging round his club, and levelling a couple of those who were nearest; "and tell the doomed Calverley, if ever Wat Turner sets eyes upon him, we shall not part so easily as I now do from you!"

The weapons wielded by the powerful arm of the smith were not such as those, who had little interest in the detention of the monk, would care to encounter. The attacks of the castle people relaxed, the energy of the rescuers increased; the smith, with the skill of a practised workman, loosed the fastenings of the postern gate, and the band, rushing through and forcibly closing it after them, father John was again a free man.

"Now, lads, to your homes," cried Turner, as they hurried on, "every man of ye. Go by different roads, and you will not be suspected. There is not a man they can swear to but myself. Now, brave hearts, farewell! We may not meet together again: but all the harm I wish ye is, that Calverley and I may soon meet; and if ever he plagues free man or bond among ye after that, say Wat Turner is a coward — Away! Tom Merritt," said

he, drawing the mason aside, "do you think of leaving Winchcombe?—you know there are always busy tongues."

"Thank ye, master Turner, but I think I shall wait and see how matters go."

"As you like Tom—only mind they don't coop you up. To my mind, there is not a man in the parish safe;—but things will not always go on so. Now, good father, we must be gone."

Merritt bent his knee to the monk, who pronounced a tremulous, but fervent benediction, on the brave fellow, who, bidding a friendly farewell to Turner, and being assured that father John should remain under his protection as long as he desired, bounded, with the spring of a deer, in the direction of his home.

On the fifteenth of July, 1377, about six months after father John was liberated by the sturdy smith, the city of London was arrayed with a costliness, and adorned throughout with a radiance in which it was befitting it should appear on the day when the royal diadem was to be placed on the brow of a young and blooming sovereign. Father John was literally borne along in the current that streamed from the adjacent villages to witness the reception of the young king as he passed over the city-bridge from his palace at Sheen.

The day was favourable for the pageant, and the houses seemed to vie with each other in the variety of their silken colours and tinselled ornaments, glowing and glittering in the morning sun. At Cornhill, indeed, the meretricious adornments of art were superseded for a brief space by the simple beauty of nature, and the eye felt a momentary

relief in resting on the green grass, and the few shaded trees that covered the open ground. But this green spot was succeeded by a dense mass of dwellings covered with hangings of a richness suitable to the reputed wealth of the city merchants; here the scene was animated in the extreme, — the motions of the crowd became unsteady and irregular, as they were actuated at once by eagerness to hurry on, and a desire to linger among the rainbow diversity of hues around them, and the glowing beauty which, arrayed with costly elegance, and smiling with anticipated enjoyment, graced every open window.

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed a solitary wanderer among the multitude, as he turned away sorrowfully from the gaudy display, "alas, for this great city, which was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearl — for in one hour will she be made desolate: and, instead of a stomacher, have only a girding of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty." But he had hardly repeated these words, ere a full stream of music, swelling in the air, overpowered the hum that arose from the multitude, and John Ball — for it was the degraded priest who had spoken — imagining this to be a prelude to the appearance of the young king, mounted upon a door-step, and, from this slight elevation, and favoured by his stature, he obtained a full view of the procession, which almost immediately passed.

First came the band of musicians, mounted on gaily caparisoned horses, and clad in jacks of crimson-damasked satin, laced round with gold; the arms

of the city richly emblazoned on the back and front, and the white velvet sleeves of their jerkins so closely laced and interlaced with gold, as almost to conceal the material on which it was wrought. Then two heralds in white-damasked velvet tabards, worked with gold in a variety of fanciful patterns, and with the city arms also emblazoned on the back. Then the sword-bearer of the chief magistrate, in a suit of polished scale armour, and on a steed accoutred in all the panoply of war. Then the Lord Mayor himself, in a flowing mantle of rich crimson velvet trimmed with ermine, and with a collar of fine gold adorned with gems, and mounted on a stately horse, whose velvet housing, fringed with gold, almost touched the ground. Two pages suitably attired walked on either side. Next appeared the two sheriffs in their scarlet mantles and gold chains. Then rode the four-and-twenty aldermen, two abreast, in loose gowns or robes of damasked-velvet or brocaded silk; and, finally, the members of the common-council closed the train.

"And is this the apparel and the bravery of merchants?" said the wandering monk within himself, as the splendid cavalcade passed by; "surely the pomp of royalty cannot surpass this." And John Ball did not draw a wrong conclusion — for when, in about half an hour, the citizens repassed, escorting their youthful sovereign, although there certainly was more cost and elegance, there was less of gorgeous display in the royal than in the civic train.

Richard, then a well-grown boy of eleven, with a countenance the early bloom of which was

brightened by an eye of singular intelligence, sat with the ease of a practised rider on a beautiful white palfrey. A cap of purple velvet, trimmed with vair, shaded his fair, open forehead and thick bright curls, and a purple mantle, lined and edged with the same costly fur, and confined at the throat with a jewelled clasp, fell back from his shoulders over the housings of the animal. His tunic was of damasked satin, of a bright pink colour, and round the waist was a purple belt, on which a variety of fanciful devices were wrought with pearls. The housings of the palfrey were of velvet, as soft and rich as the royal mantle, and of a similar hue, but enlivened with a profusion of goldsmiths' work, and bordered round with a heavy gold fringe.

Richard looked upon the pomp and circumstance around him with all the pleasure and vanity of a boy, turning every moment with some laughing sally addressed to his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, who rode by his side, or, more frequently, to the young Earl of Arundel, the newly-installed marshal of England. These were followed by Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who had so recently resigned the office of lord marshal, Sir John Burleigh, lord chamberlain, the Earls of Oxford, Kent, Buckingham, &c.

The procession moved on, and the monk followed amidst the mass; but if he looked wistfully at the pageant, it was only in the hope that some opportunity might offer of publicly addressing the young king, or, rather, his uncle, and appealing for justice; but no opportunity did offer. Indeed, at such a moment, when the good citizens were dis-

playing their taste and munificence, it seemed little less than folly to expect it.

Next to the considerate hospitality (if it may be so termed) of allowing the water-conduit in Cheapside to spout wine, nothing elicited more unqualified approbation from the lower classes than a temporary building erected at the extremity of the before-mentioned place. This building, coloured so as to give an idea of firmly-cemented stone, presented the appearance of a castle, with four circular towers and a spacious gateway midway between. The arch stretched across nearly the whole extent of the horse-road, so that the towers terminating the four angles of the gateway stood parallel with the verge of the footpath. In each of the towers, at about five feet from the ground, was an arched doorway, in which stood a young maiden about sixteen, attired in a white flowing robe, with a chaplet of white roses encircling her hair, and holding a gold cup in her right hand, and a crystal vase in her left. On the castellated summit of the arch, which was about four feet in depth, and just in the centre between the towers, was placed a figure of equal height with the maidens, apparently of gold, representing an angel holding a beautifully wrought crown in its right hand, which, as the procession approached, the angel bent down, and presented to the young king. At the same instant, the two maidens, in the two towers at the east side, filled their cups with wine from a crystal fountain at their right hand, and each, with a graceful smile, proffered the draught to Richard. They then took, from the vase on their left, a handful of golden leaves, which they

wafted towards the young king, and concluded by showering a number of counterfeit gold florences on his head.

Richard, after tasting of the cups, presented the first to his uncle, and the other to Arundel; and then each noble, as he passed, took the replenished cup from the hands of the Hebes, and drank health and prosperity to the youthful sovereign.

The monk mingled with the multitude, and saw the merry citizens escort their sovereign to Temple-bar; and then the royal train proceeded, with somewhat less applause than had as yet attended their route. Indeed, after passing the few houses in the suburbs, the solitary dwellings of the nobles stood along the Strand, few and far between — those on the left with their spacious gardens sloping to the river, and the three or four on the right occupying a space as extended as the wall which enclosed the capacious garden attached to the convent of the abbot of Westminster would permit. So large, indeed, was this garden, as to cover the whole space between the gardens of the Strand houses and the site of what is now Long-acre, and eastward and westward the space between Saint Martin's and Drury-lane. When they had passed the pretty village of Charing, with its cross, the procession turned to the left, leaving behind an ample extent of open country, intersected by the Oxford and Reading roads on the west, and bounded on the north by the bold and picturesque range of the Hampstead and Highgate hills.

John Ball pressed on with the multitude; but the immediate proximity of the palace, where all was splendour and motion, was not to the liking of

one who till that day had never even dreamed of such things as had now met his sight. His nerves were weak, and he felt irritated at the insolence with which the royal guards, and the pages of the nobles, drove back the populace. His body, too, was weak, and he felt exhausted with his long and fatiguing walk : slowly and sadly he at length retraced his steps to his humble dwelling in the Minories.

The next morning he repaired again to Westminster. The hall of the palace was open for all who chose to enter, and in the midst, elevated on three circular marble steps, was a hollow marble pillar, surmounted by a large gilt eagle, from beneath whose talons flowed wine into four marble basins, of which all who entered were permitted to drink at pleasure. But the monk was no wine-drinker; and with the feelings of one unaccustomed to behold extravagance, he turned away from the pillar with an inward reproach to the donor, for not applying the money to a better purpose. He left the hall, and seeing that a path was found from the gate of the palace to the north-west entrance of the abbey, by a slightly elevated platform, covered with fine crimson cloth of tapestry, he naturally concluded that the king would pass that way to hear mass, and accordingly took his stand as near as possible to the platform. Inexperienced as the monk was in the etiquette of courts, he augured ill for his suit when he saw the royal retainers, with all the insolence of office, range themselves along the platform, and the nobles and their pages, and the officers of the royal household in their splendid dresses issue from the

palace. But when he beheld the young king himself, with Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, on his right hand, and the Bishop of London on his left, he started back with an exclamation of surprise (for wrapt up in himself, and heedless of the passing gossip of the day, he had not heard of Sudbury's elevation); and forcing a passage through the assembled crowd, hopeless and despondent, he pursued his journey eastward.

On the sixth morning from the coronation, Richard, satisfied with shows and revelry, left Westminster, and retired with his mother, the fair Joan of Kent, to Kensington, to rest, as it were, his young head upon the maternal bosom. But even here the officious loyalty of his good subjects intruded; for a gorgeous mummery was to be played that night by a hundred and thirty of the wealthiest citizens of London.

A little after night-fall, the beautiful widow of the Black Prince sat in the oriel window of the hall, alternately looking with a mother's eyes upon her son, who was sporting with some of the young nobles, and then again turning to the window to listen for the approach of the citizens. She wore a small conical cap of gold tissue, terminated by a narrow band of purple velvet, closely studded with diamonds, beneath which her hair, soft and glossy as in her girlhood, was parted on the forehead, and fell back on her shoulders in rather a waving mass, than distinct curls. Her dress was composed of a petticoat and boddice of saffron-coloured damasked satin, with long hanging sleeves. The boddice sat close to the bust, and was confined up the front by twelve gold studs. A girdle

of purple and gold, fastened by a buckle radiant with gems, encircled her waist; and the full long-trained petticoat, beneath which the sharp points of the poleyn, or gold-embroidered shoe, was just visible, was clasped in the front at equal distances by two rose-jewels. A mantle of purple velvet, confined on each shoulder by a diamond brooch, fell in rich folds at her back.

While she was listening and wondering at the lateness of the hour, the hall door was suddenly thrown open, and a blaze of light, and a strain of melody, burst simultaneously upon her senses. A dozen minstrels gaily attired with timbrels, cornets, sackbuts, and other instruments, preceded by as many youths, carrying large wax tapers or torch-lights, formed into a double rank in the hall; in the middle of which passed the city pageant. The lord mayor was at its head, habited as an emperor, in a tunic of cloth of gold, tastefully embroidered with black eagles, and the sleeves, which hung full, confined at the wrist and just below the elbow, by bands of black velvet, on which eagles were represented by small pearls. A mantle of black velvet lined with minever, or powdered ermine, floated from his shoulder. On his right hand was a citizen attired as the pope. Then followed the twenty-four aldermen in the dress of cardinals; then forty-eight in the gowns of say and red cloaks of esquires;—others in the purple robe, lined with fur, peculiar to the knight: while some, still more ambitious, wore the emblazoned surcoat of a baron.

The lord mayor approached the table at which Richard had seated himself, and presenting a box

of dice, challenged the young monarch to play. At the same instant, one esquire placed on the table a bowl of gold, another a box containing jewels, and a third a golden cup, as pledges for the civic gambler. Richard accepted the challenge, and of course was permitted to win; and father John, who stood among the group looking on, seized the favourable moment of royal exultation to prefer his suit. He stepped forward, and kneeling before the young king, to the surprise of all, and to the particular annoyance of the ostentatious citizens, exclaimed —

"Thou art set over the people, and to the Lord's anointed I come to seek for justice."

"Who are you, bold man?" inquired the Duke of Lancaster, impatiently, "who thus break in upon his Grace's sport?"

"I am one," replied the monk, rising, and turning calmly to Lancaster, "whom injustice has thus forced —— "

"Hah!" interrupted Sudbury, advancing, and who had hitherto sat apart looking on at the mummery; "is it thou who presumest to approach the presence? Please your Grace, and you, noble duke," looking first at Richard and then addressing Lancaster, "he is a monk of our late abbey at Winchcombe, whom, for certain acts of rebellion to our authority, we expelled."

"Why, monk," asked Richard quickly, "why dost thou appeal to us?"

"Pardon me, my liege," interposed Sudbury, "but it becomes not your grace to parley with a degraded monk — a bondman's son! one who would fain excite a spirit of insubordination among

the class from which he sprung: who would sow the seeds of disobedience and disorder, and inculcate the absurd doctrine that *all* should be free!"

"Does he indeed hold such opinions, my Lord of Canterbury?" asked Lancaster.

"He does, my Lord, and that was one of the causes of his suspension."

"Indeed!" said Lancaster; "next then, I suppose, we shall have the villeins of the soil dictating to their lords, when they hear that a base-born priest has had the audacity to enter the royal presence! Ho! attendants! Away with this serf-sprung shaveling! who holds that all should be free!"

"Triumph not, John of Lancaster, for I say unto you, *all* SHALL be free! You, and it may be that the proudest of you all, may yet quail before the base-born!" and the monk fixed a glance first upon the duke, and then upon Sudbury. The archbishop turned away, while Lancaster, laughing scornfully at the threat, commanded the royal attendants instantly to eject him: and, amidst the jeers of the nobles and citizens, the monk was, without further parley, hurried away from the hall.

It was something more than a year from the flight of Holgrave, when business called Calverley to Gloucester; and, on passing along Silver girdle-street, his eye encountered Black Jack, whom he had not before seen since Edith's trial. The foreman accosted him after his usual manner, and whispered that he had something of moment to

communicate, if he would accompany him to the Mitre. After some hesitation Calverley, consented, more especially as Black Jack hinted something about news of Holgrave; and, when seated in the room, in which their former interview had taken place, Oakley inquired if the Lord de Boteler, some twelve months ago, did not offer a reward for the apprehension of a certain bondman named — "

"Stephen Holgrave!" eagerly interrupted Calverley. "Have you heard or seen any thing of him?"

"By the green wax! steward, one would think the man was your property, you seem so anxious— but now tell *me* has any thing been ever heard of him?"

"No, not a syllable;" replied Calverley in almost a fever of excitement, "but be quick, and say what you know?"

"Not so fast, Master Calverley. Did you ever send in the direction of Dean Forest?"

"Yes, yes, many times," answered the impatient steward; "and we offered a large reward to any one who would give information of his retreat?"

"A very pretty method, truly! You know not the miners and forgers of Dean Forest! — why I would stake a noble to a silver-penny, that if you had discovered he was hidden there, and legally demanded him, he would be popped down in a bucket, to the bottom of some mine, where, even the art of Master Calverley could not have dragged him to the light of day until the Forest was clear of the pack:—but, however, to speak to the point," perceiving that the steward's patience was well

nigh exhausted — "I saw Stephen Holgrave yesterday, in the Forest."

"And did you not arrest him?"

"No, no, steward — Black Jack is not so sick of his life as to throw himself into a furnace. There were not less than one hundred smiths and miners about him; and wo be to the man who should stir their ire."

"I shall back to Sudley," cried the steward, hastily, "and my lord will reclaim him."

"But, steward, surely it is more than a year and a day since I heard the shouting of the hue and cry; and you know the Forest of Dean is privileged. I'll warrant he knows too much of the bondage of Sudley to venture beyond its precincts."

Calverley did not reply to the interrogatory or allusion, but persisted in saying that the baron would claim the bondman, and that the ranger of the Forest durst not dispute the demand: and, besides, should it be necessary, a royal mandate could be procured.

Black Jack was for an instant vexed, that Calverley did not require his assistance; but, shrewdly guessing that the steward wished to have as little to do with him as possible, and also conscious how small chance there was of succeeding by the direct mode, he laughed within himself at the probability that, after failing to accomplish the object he seemed so much to desire, Calverley would, ultimately, be compelled to apply to him. Indeed, had not the steward's mind been so entirely engrossed by the thoughts of Holgrave, he could not have failed to remark how quickly the foreman,

from offering the strongest objections to the plan he proposed adopting, agreed with him that it was the wisest and best.

"But, Master Calverley," said Black Jack, as the former abruptly rose to depart, "is my intelligence worth nothing, setting aside the actual loss I have sustained by sitting for four hours spending my money in this room, when I ought to have been fishing about for jobs?"

"O yes, I had forgotten," (drawing out his purse, and presenting a mark to the foreman);—"I could not expect you could have troubled yourself in this affair without payment; — are you satisfied?"

"Yes, yes," he replied, grumblingly, as he pocketed the coin, "Black Jack is easily satisfied."

"And so is the cormorant," muttered Calverley, as he closed the door after him, and hastened to remount his horse.

Supper was served up in the hall ere Calverley had returned to the castle, and he paused a few moments to consider whether he should immediately impart what he had heard, or defer the communication until the banquet were ended; but this hesitation did not arise from any delicacy he felt in disturbing the social enjoyment of the hour, but guests had arrived that morning, and Calverley, ever since the loss of his ear, had been very reluctant to appear before strangers. But the recollection of his mutilation, thus forced upon his mind, instantly decided him. The delay of a single hour might enable Holgrave to leave the forest; for who could say that it was his intention to make the place a permanent residence? He, therefore, in-

stantly changed his riding dress for one more adapted for the occasion, and placing a black velvet cap on his head (for we have before observed it was his peculiar privilege to remain always covered), without a moment's delay he proceeded to the hall, and entering it through the upper door, stood at a little distance behind De Boteler's chair, awaiting until the baron's eye should fall upon him. De Boteler presently turning to give some order to a page, Calverley took the opportunity to approach, and, bowing, said softly, "My lord, I have heard tidings of Stephen Holgrave."

De Boteler's colour deepened as he made some hasty exclamation in reply, but the duties of hospitality were paramount at that moment, and shortly saying he would attend to him another time, Calverley retired.

Isabella's quick eye had observed the action of Calverley and the momentary embarrassment of De Boteler; and as the idea of her lost child was connected with every thing strange or doubtful that she saw, her mind was instantly filled with a thousand surmises.—Had any trace of Holgrave been discovered? Had the obstinate monk made any disclosure that Calverley, by some fortunate chance might have become acquainted with? These, and a variety of other conjectures, possessing less colour of reason, so much engrossed her thoughts, that she could scarcely command her feelings sufficiently to pay that graceful and courteous attention to her guests, for which she was in general so much distinguished. No opportunity, however, offered of satisfying her curiosity until the guests had retired for the night; and then, upon entering

the ante-room of her chamber, De Boteler was sitting listening to the steward's statement.

"Isabella," said the baron, as she entered, "Calverley has ascertained the retreat of Stephen Holgrave." She had anticipated something of the kind; but the effect it produced was singular. An electrical thrill seemed to vibrate through her frame, and a sudden coldness chilled her brow; but ere it could have been *said* that her cheek was pale, the whole countenance was suffused with a deepened glow, and rallying her energies, she asked, with assumed composure, "where he was hidden?"

"In the Forest of Dean," replied De Boteler; "and Calverley has every reason to suppose he has been concealed there since he left Sudley."

"Did not the hue and cry pass through the forest?"

"Yes, Isabella; but, by my faith, it seems they are such sturdy knaves in that forest, that even the promise of reward has no effect upon them."

"Then they must be compelled to surrender the bondman. — Calverley," continued the lady, turning to the steward; "can you rely on your information?"

Calverley replied in the affirmative: and then, on a motion from Isabella, withdrew.

"My lord, you will give proper instructions," resumed Isabella, in a tone that seemed to imply she expected the most rigorous measures to be adopted.

"I am afraid, Isabella," replied De Boteler, that the knave has escaped us. Dean Forest is a royal demesne, and a bondman, remaining un-

claimed, in such a place, for a year and a day, can claim the privilege of a king's villein."

"Roland de Boteler, do you intend to submit? —but you have not a mother's feelings!"

"There can be no reasons for the suspicions you still entertain," replied the baron, with more seriousness than he had spoken before. "The knave has been punished enough. There was no great matter of crime after all in burning the house — it was his own — aye, as much as this castle is mine. And do you think that any chance would ever make me consider that another had a better right to this building than I?—If I could have got hold of him at the time I would—but now, let it pass — an obstinate spirit like his, is better away. You see what we obtained by imprisoning the monk — the whole barony up in arms in a rescue! and the bravest retainer in my castle killed by the club of the audacious smith! But that shall not pass so easily — for, by my faith, if I light upon that meddling varlet ten years hence, he shall hang as high as gibbet can raise him. I repeat," continued he, in a determined tone, "that I will not interfere" and, rising hastily; as if he meant to escape from the argument, he left the room.

There might be one reason found for the more merciful feelings De Boteler evinced on this occasion, when it is said that he was on the eve of departing for London to join the Duke of Gloucester, who was preparing to make an incursion into France. The idea, no doubt, of again treading the French soil, recalled to his mind the service which the fugitive Holgrave, had performed. The baroness, however, did not appear to heed the decisive

tone of her lord; for, with the wilfulness of her sex, she determined that his departure should be the signal for commencing operations.

Immediately upon De Boteler's departure, which occurred in a few days, measures were taken to procure a royal grant of the villein to his late lord; and upon the instant of its being obtained, Calverley, attended by about a score of retainers, left the castle; without the slightest apprehension for his personal safety, or the most distant fear that his application would fail.

On arrival, his errand was made known to Neville, the deputy constable of St. Briavel's, who readily attended him with his men. As they rode towards the foundry, which had been indicated as the place of Holgrave's employment, a suppressed murmur from the trees by the road side attracted the constable's attention, and it was said by those nearest, that he gave a significant smile as he passed. The party dismounted at the foundry, and on entering, Holgrave was observed standing close to the forge, surrounded by about a dozen smiths. Neville smiled as he addressed Holgrave.

"I am commanded," said he, "by King Edward, to deliver you to the Lord de Boteler's steward. Here is the royal mandate;" and he drew from his pocket a parchment bearing the privy signature.

"And here,' said Calverley, unfolding the royal grant, "is the deed that transfers the king's villein to his late and rightful lord."

"Master Neville," said Holgrave, "can the king's grant make a freeman a slave? or can the king's order give you authority to molest a man

who has committed no crime? I owe no fealty to King Edward, except as a freeman, and as you yourself are bound to do. I stand here as free as any man of you, and no one shall compel me to become a slave.—But it is to you, foul murderer!" glancing fiercely on Calverley, who shrank from his gaze — "it is to you I owe this! Were my poor mother's death, my own ruin, and the loss of my farm and my home, not enough, that you continue to hunt me down like a wild beast?"

"Honest man," said Neville, mildly, "you are described in the king's writ as a bondman of his grace; and two men have this day deposed that you acknowledged yourself as Lord de Boteler's villein, and swore fealty to him in his own court."

"They lie, Master Neville! Bring them here, and I will maintain, in combat against them both, that they have sworn falsely."

"It was not to parley you came here, Sir Constable," said Calverley, "but to fulfil the king's command. This bondman, you must have been aware before-hand, would attempt to deny his bondage, like any other of his class who break their bonds."

"The king's order shall be obeyed to the letter, sir," replied Neville, as he looked somewhat contemptuously at Calverley, from whom he did not expect so abrupt an address; and then, gently taking the unresisting hand of Holgrave, placed it in that of the steward. A shout of pain from Calverley declared the cordiality of the gripe with which he was favoured by his enemy, and he withdrew his crushed fingers, amidst the cheers and shouts of the spectators.

"Now, steward," resumed the constable, "Mark Neville has performed the king's commands as a loyal subject, and it remains with you to do the rest."

"And do you not intend to give me safe conduct through the forest, Master Neville?" asked Calverley, with some alarm — "this is a part of your duty. You are bound to convey this bondman to the verge of the forest, and you are also bound to prevent any inhabitant of it from abetting his cause."

"Read this warrant," replied Neville: "is there a syllable there of safe conduct? I am ordered to deliver up the man — I have done so; and now I wish you good even, and a pleasant ride back."

A loud laugh from the smiths followed this speech; and Calverley, now overcome by personal apprehensions, caught the constable's arm as he was passing through the doorway, and inquired, if he really imagined he was complying with the royal mandate by such a mockery.

"It is no mockery, steward — I have done my duty; and if you cannot do yours, is it my fault?" And then, shaking off Calverley's grasp, he mounted his horse, and with his attendants, amidst deafening cheers, took the road to the castle.

Calverley's eyes turned in the direction of the shout, and a mass of living beings, variously armed, were seen swarming from the adjacent wood, and rushing on to the foundry. He remembered that he had not more than twenty to oppose to this multitude; and his heart died within him as he saw the glowing cheek and derisive smile of Holgrave, and thought that now was the moment for

his revenge. In an instant, not only was the foundry filled with the men, but the window and doorway were darkened with their black heads without.

Calverley was now forced to assume a courage which he did not feel; and looking sternly around, he asked, in as firm a voice as he could command, why he was thus surrounded? or whether they intended to make him a prisoner?

"No, steward," said the spokesman of the smiths, "you are no prisoner—you are at liberty to go as soon as you like; and I would advise you, as a friend, to go quickly, for we men of the forest are not like your Sudley folk." Calverley, in some measure, re-assured by the unexpected mildness of this reply, quickly said,

"I have no wish to remain longer—give me free passage with this bondman, and I shall instantly depart."

"Bondman!" exclaimed Holgrave, raising his clenched hand, but he did not strike—"lying craven!"

"I tell you, steward," said the smith who had before spoken, and stepping so near Calverley that he involuntarily drew back, "if you prize your life, you will call no man here a bondman. I am free—that man is free—" pointing to Holgrave, "and we are all free—all sworn brothers; and no one shall dare," raising his voice, "to brand, with such a name, a mother's son among us! You have received fair warning, and leave to go: retire now—instantly, if you are wise! Clear a passage there for my Lord de Boteler's steward! There is now room for you to pass—your retainers are waiting without—and now take the man you call

a bondman, and away with you all. What! you will not lay hold of him? Take him, I say!" elevating his voice—"seize the villein, and drag him back to his bondage! What! not a finger, after all the trouble you have taken?—then, away with you alone!—away!" And Calverley, from the mere instinct of obedience to a superior power, moved towards the door. "And if ever," continued the smith, "you are found hunting in this forest again for bondmen, as you call them, we may chance to give you a lodging where you will have little reason to complain that the sun shines too brightly!"

Calverley made no reply; but, without looking either at Holgrave, or the man who had so fiercely and tauntingly addressed him, took the advantage offered—passed through the door of the foundry, and through the yielding ranks of sneerers and jibers outside; and mounting his horse, galloped rapidly away from the scene of his defeat, with the shout of a hue and cry following his track as far as the foresters considered their legitimate domain.

CHAPTER IV.

The tenth evening after this exploit closed in heavily, and the wind blew chill and gusty, loaded with drizzling rain. Oakley felt little inconvenience from the night as, wrapped in a large cloak, and with an unusually broad-brimmed hat, he cautiously approached the low-roofed dwelling of Holgrave, in the forest of Dean. He had little difficulty in distinguishing it, Harvey having a few days previously, though without the least intimation of the reason, watched Holgrave from the foundry to his home. The blaze of a bright wood fire was streaming through the casement. Black Jack stept near enough to obtain a view of the interior, in order to assure himself that he was not mistaken, although, from the description he had received, he had little doubt; and a single glance convinced him it was the dwelling he sought. Holgrave was lying along a bench in the opposite chimney corner, his right elbow resting on the form, and his right cheek reposing on the upraised palm. He was looking with a smile at Margaret, who was sitting with her back to the window, and, by the motion of her

right hand, was apparently engaged in sewing. The gazer conjectured that Holgrave had been asking her to sing, for, as he stood, she commenced a strain of such sweet and touching melody, that even Oakley (who, spite of his being so admirably "fit for treason," *had* "music in his soul,") listened with such breathless attention that one would have been tempted to conclude he might "be trusted." The ballad concluded, and Oakley still looked on, until Holgrave, after a few moments of apparently cheerful conversation, arose from the bench, in all probability with the intention of preparing for rest.

Oakley stepped back from the window, and stood an instant apparently irresolute. "Plague on this Holgrave!" he muttered—"I wish I had sent Harvey; he could have managed it as well as I; but one don't like giving these fellows half the profit, besides making them as wise as one's self;—but what is the knave to me?" And then, as if his slight scruples were dissipated by the consideration of the little sympathy that ought to exist between one circumstanced like Holgrave and himself, he drew his hat more over his brow, and folding his cloak closer around him, approached, although, it must be admitted, with rather an indecisive step, the door of the cottage, and gave a slight tap. "I will go to the door, Stephen," he heard Margaret say, with a quickness which seemed to imply that the simple circumstance of a summons to the door at a somewhat late hour was sufficient to awaken her fears.

No reply was given, but the door was instantly unclosed by Holgrave. Black Jack stood in the

shade, just beyond the light that streamed from within, but so close that Holgrave, without crossing the threshold, merely leant his head forward, and heard him say, "Stephen Holgrave, do you remember the cross-roads and Hailes church-yard?"

Holgrave started. "Hailes church-yard!" he repeated, bending nearer to the speaker.

"Aye; and do you remember what you promised the men in the vizors, when the craven fled, leaving his ear where perhaps his carcase may not find a resting place, and when the abbey folk were rushing on with torch and cudgel?"

"Yes," replied Holgrave, in a voice which told that the abrupt questions had called up all the painful events of that night—"yes, I remember well, I said that if any of those who helped me then ever wanted a friend, they were not to forget Stephen Holgrave."

"You did; and do you not recognize me, as he who gave the alarm when the fellows had peeped above the wall at the cross-roads, and whose hat was pierced by an arrow as he stood beneath the tree that overshadowed the grave at Hailes?"

"Yes, yes," said Holgrave, grasping his hand, "I remember all"—convinced, not by the voice, for on both occasions the voice had been disguised, but by the presumptive proofs.

"Stephen Holgrave," continued the foreman, still speaking in a low tone, but slowly and distinctly, "you can now return the service of that night. I want your aid immediately;—it is not in a matter that will hazard your life. I have given a promise, and you are the only man that can aid me to keep it. Will you assist me?"

"I will," replied Holgrave, firmly — "Do you want me now?"

"Yes, instantly. You shall know the business in less than half an hour."

"Stop one moment," returned Holgrave, and stepping into the cottage, he took a warm frieze cloak from a peg in the wall, and throwing it over his shoulders, was reaching for a kind of short-handled spear that lay on a shelf above the fire-place, when Margaret, clasping his left hand, looked up in his face, and asked with a pale and trembling lip, "Stephen, where are you going? Who is that man?"

"Do not be alarmed, Margaret. I must go with the man who spoke to me, but I shall not be long."

"Go with him! Who is he? His purpose cannot be a honest one, or he would not conceal himself. Who is he, Stephen?" she repeated in a loud voice, and clinging more closely to the hand he was striving to disengage.

"He is an honest man, Margaret," replied Holgrave, snatching away his hand, vexed that one who had befriended him should hear his wife's suspicions. But, as he fastened his cloak, he added, in a more soothing tone, "Do not fear. It is one of those who helped to give my poor mother a christian's grave, and he wants me to do some little turn for him now."

"Are you sure, Stephen? — are you quite sure it is the same man?" "Yes, yes, Margaret, quite sure," replied Holgrave in a tone that told her all further remonstrance would be useless. "Did I not return safe from Gloucester?" asked he, linger-

ing an instant, as he saw her heart was sinking with dread.

"But you did not go there in the dark night, and with only one man; and even then, where would you have been now only for our good friends in the forest. Oh Stephen!" she continued, starting up and throwing her arms round his neck, as she imagined she saw something of irresolution in his countenance, — "do not go this night."

"I must go," he said, as he disengaged himself, and, without venturing another look or word, rushed from the cottage, and joined Black Jack.

They walked on rapidly through the forest, but neither spoke. Black Jack, hardened as he was, was not altogether at ease in thus betraying a confiding man; and this feeling was not lessened by the suspicions Margaret had expressed, and he endeavoured to deceive even himself into a belief that he should have been better pleased if the yeoman had taken the wife's advice. However, he resolved, as he hurried on, that he would be well paid for so troublesome an affair. Holgrave was not more composed. In despite of what he considered his better judgment, he could not help being, in some measure, imbued with the fears of his wife; and, as he followed his silent conductor, a thousand indistinct apprehensions floated in his mind.

Their route was a lonely one. Scarcely a light was visible in the numerous dwellings they passed, and they reached the verge of the forest without encountering a single human being. They now walked along the high road, which, with a tract of uninclosed pasture-land stretching to the right,

and a scanty neglected hedge skirting the left, had a wild and dreary aspect, which however might, perhaps, with more justice be attributed to the darkness and gloom of the night, than to any thing particularly cheerless in the road itself. They had proceeded about a dozen paces beyond a narrow lane, turning to the left, when Oakley, without assigning a reason, stepped back; and, as Holgrave turned to enquire the cause, he saw some men close behind him; and ere, in the surprize of the moment, he could raise his weapon to defend himself in case of need, a blow from a club felled him to the ground. The blow did not deprive him of consciousness, and now, convinced of treachery, he sprang on his feet determined not to yield with life. But it was not possible for one arm, even though that arm was nerved by an indomitable soul, to hold out long in so unequal a strife. It was in vain that he strove to attack or grapple with one — a host appeared to encompass him. Incessant blows from staves and clubs, although more annoying than really dangerous, wearied him out, and one, descending on his already swollen right hand, finally decided the contest. The arm dropped, and the weapon, that had as yet, in some measure, protected him, was easily wrested from his relaxed grasp; and the impotent fury of an almost frantic resistance availed but for a short space. He was gagged bound hand and foot, and thrown into a cart that drew up for the purpose from the adjacent lane.

Black Jack and his retainers accompanied the vehicle on foot, none choosing to trust himself with one, who, though now to all appearance

firmly secured, had shown such an untractable spirit, and in this manner proceeded, without interruption, to Sudley.

On the second morning after Holgrave's capture, the baroness, upon Calverley's entering the room in which she sat, inquired if he had seen the wife of Holgrave? "I hear," continued she, without noticing the surprise which the question created, "that she is in the court-yard, and has had the insolence to ask one of the varlets if she might speak with me! Go, Calverley, and desire her to leave the castle instantly."

Calverley withdrew and repeated the order to a domestic.

"No," said Margaret, as the command was delivered, "I shall not leave this court-yard, except by force, till I have seen my husband. Surely the favour that is granted to the wife of a common drawlatch, will not be denied to me!"

The steward, although vexed at what he considered her obstinacy, yet delayed to enforce her removal until he had tried what his personal remonstrance might effect;—but no man approaches a woman, whom he has once, to the fullest extent of the word, loved, with that calm and business-like feeling with which he can discourse with another. The colour deepened, too, on Margaret's cheek, as she saw him advance, and when, in an authoritative, though somewhat embarrassed tone, he asked why she had not obeyed the order that had been given, she raised her eyes, flashing with a spirit that perhaps had never before animated them, and replied—

"Thomas Calverley, I told him who delivered

the message, that I would not quit the castle till I had seen Stephen; and I tell *you* now, that I shall not go till I know what you have done with him."

"Nothing has been done to him but what he merited," answered Calverley, haughtily, surprised at her firmness, and by a singular feeling annoyed that solicitude for her husband should have called forth such an unusual demonstration.

Margaret felt the falsehood of his reply, but she had not the spirit or language of Edith to reprove it.

"Then you must choose to submit voluntarily to my lady's wishes," he added.

"I do not," returned Margaret; "I shall sit here till the Lady de Boteler thinks better of what she has said, and suffers me to see my husband." Calverley turned away with a frown, but, ere he had retired a dozen steps, he turned again. "Margaret," said he, as he approached, "you are only harming yourself by this obstinacy. The baroness will not grant you permission to visit the dungeon, and, if you persist, there are servitors enough about to compel obedience. But if you go now, I promise to obtain what you ask. Rather than the kernes should lay a rude hand upon you — I would — gratify even *him*. Come at six," he added, as he turned abruptly away, forgetful, at this moment, of all the evil of which he had been the author, and only remembering, with hate and bitterness, that Holgrave possessed the love which had been denied to him.

He had spoken with an earnestness that induced Margaret to believe him sincere. At all events

there seemed no better alternative than to trust him; so she rose and retired from the court-yard. Punctually at six she appeared again at the castle, and the confidence with which she crossed over to the keep, shewed the reliance she had placed on Calverley's word. The keeper had received the order to admit her, and she ascended the spiral steps and entered the prison that had been previously occupied by Edith. As Holgrave raised his head when the door opened, Margaret saw that his face was swollen and livid, and, when he kissed her cheek as she threw herself upon his neck, his lips were parched and burning.

"Do not look on me so wildly, Margaret," said he; "these bruises are nothing. Aye, even that," as she was examining, with the apprehensions of a tender wife, the black and almost shapeless appearance of his right hand and arm; "even that would be as well as ever in less than a month — but it is their triumph and their treachery I feel: it is this that gnaws my very soul — and all because I thought myself too wise to take a woman's counsel, — and in the very prison, too, where they thrust my poor mother! I have not tasted meat or drink since I entered. There stand the water and the bread — though the burning in my throat almost drives me mad: not a drop will I taste, though the leech told me to drink as much as I could — nor a morsel will I eat."

"No, not of theirs," eagerly interrupted Margaret, drawing a bottle from beneath her cloak, and pouring into a wooden cup, which she took from her pocket, some diluted wine; "but drink this, Stephen: do drink it—it will cool your mouth."

"No, Margaret, I have sworn!" and no persuasion could induce him to alter his purpose.

"Steward," said the Lady Isabella on the following morning, "Holgrave rejects his food — I fear I must release him!"

"Pardon me, lady, it is only a stratagem to get free."

"Do you think so, Calverley? — but the varlet has the obstinate spirit of his mother — and you know I do not desire his death!"

"Holgrave," resumed the steward, with an incredulous smile, "has no intention of shortening his life:" and then he strove, with all his eloquence, to persuade her it was a mere feint.

"However," returned Isabella, "I will send the leech to him."

The leech was sent, and reported that the prisoner was in a state of extreme exhaustion, arising, it would seem, from inanition, as there was no evidence of bodily illness sufficient to have reduced him to so low a state.

Calverley's specious arguments availed no longer, and, muttering curses upon the jailor, whose officiousness had prevented the possibility of that consummation he so devoutly wished, he received the command to set Holgrave at liberty.

That evening Calverley summoned every bondman of the barony to assemble in the hall. Innumerable were the conjectures respecting this summons as the villeins hastened to obey the call, and, when all were collected, a strong sensation of

sympathy was excited when they beheld Stephen Holgrave led into the midst; his countenance still discoloured, and so pale and attenuated, that it was difficult to recognize the hale, robust yeoman of former days, in the subdued and exhausted bondman who now took his stand among his fellows.

When all were assembled, Calverley stated that Stephen Holgrave, having refused to swear that he would not again take advantage of his liberty to flee from bondage, the baroness not wishing, from a feeling of clemency, to punish his obstinacy farther, had desired him to declare that she should hold each bondman responsible for the appearance of Holgrave, and should consider their moveables and crops forfeited in the event of his absconding.

A murmur ran through the hall as the steward spoke; and Holgrave, exerting a momentary energy, stept forward, and, looking scornfully at his enemy—

"Lead me back to prison!" said he; "no man shall be answerable for me."

But Calverley, without appearing to heed his address, resumed—

"You are all now publicly warned; and it will behove you, at your peril, to look to that bondman!" and then, without deigning farther parley, he left the hall.

There was much discontent among the bondmen as they withdrew from the castle, conversing on the arbitrary decision just pronounced, and on the probability that, before the expiration of three months, that decision would be enforced in consequence of Holgrave's flight; for they could not

conceive the idea of the self-sacrifice of a generous spirit, which would rather endure, than that the oppressed should suffer further oppression. Certainly, according to the letter of the law of villeinage, the bondmen of Sudley had no just cause for discontent; but then, because it was unusual, at least on that manor, to exercise the prerogative to its fullest extent, they almost forgot that this threatened appropriation of their effects was nothing more than the assertion of a right. But there was one novel feature in the announcement of which they had some colour for complaining;—their being considered responsible for one of their own class. However, as in all similar cases where power gives the law to weakness, though there might be a little useless murmuring, there was no alternative but to submit.

Holgrave, as his offer to continue a prisoner was not accepted, left Sudley among the bondmen, and walked slowly towards his old abode. Margaret had returned, and been suffered to take possession of the dwelling that had remained unoccupied during their absence—which had stood just as she left it on the night of her departure; and Holgrave, with all the bitterness and gloom of the past, and with considerably more of physical weakness than he had ever experienced, threw himself again in his mother's chair in the chimney-corner, and silently partook of the refreshment that the rejoicing Margaret set before him.

CHAPTER V.

We have as yet confined our observations to the bondmen; but in 1381, an act of ill-judged policy of the nine nobles and prelates who formed the council of young Richard gave rise to a sort of coalition among the lower classes. This act was the famous tax of three groats upon every individual who had attained the age of fifteen. The hearth-money, which had been enforced by the Black Prince upon the inhabitants of Guienne, and which had probably formed the precedent for this tax, had not worked well, and there appeared little chance that the present exaction, framed as it was by those who directed the royal councils, would work better. Certain wealthy individuals contracted with the government for the collection of the tax, and private rapacity thus rendered the imposition more obnoxious than it otherwise might have been.

It was on the evening of a feast day, and the day-labourers and villeins around Saint Albans were enjoying the repose, that even in that period of dondage, was never infringed upon, and which,

from the frequent recurrence of the festivals afforded a sufficient relaxation from manual exertion to recruit the strength; when suddenly, amidst a group in the market-place, who were discoursing upon the severity of the poll tax, then collecting, appeared John Ball.

"Men and brethren, are ye bond or free?" he abruptly asked, in a deep, solemn voice.

"It matters little, good father," replied a gloomy looking peasant, as he started from the earth where he had been reclining; "the freeman has little to boast of now beyond the villein."

"The freeman shall be righted, and the bondman freed — and then will the mission that has made John Ball for thrice twelve months a homeless wanderer, never resting under the same roof a second night — then will that mission be accomplished — and even if he lay his head upon the block, he will have executed the task allotted to him — will have finished the work he was inspired to begin!"

"The bondman may be freed," replied the man who had before spoken; "but when shall the freeman be righted? I took little heed of these things when I heard you preach freedom to the villeins two years ago: but my children have been sick; my wife has been struck with a palsy; and I, who had not a penny to call my own, gave eleven groats yesterday for myself, my wife, and the two boys; and to-morrow must I sell the last blanket that covers her, to pay the twelfth."

The man turned away as he spoke, and John Ball, whose mission was rather to the serf than the freeman, commenced an harangue to the gathering

crowd. His figure, as we have before observed, was imposing; and as his eyes, flashing with an enthusiasm perhaps too ardent to be compatible with sound reason, fell on the numbers who now encompassed him, he looked like one fitted to become the apostle of those who had none to help them.

"The dew of heaven is not for you," he began; "nor is the fat of the land your portion: but I am sent to pour a stream of light into the dark chambers—even to enlighten the soul of the weary bondman. I will sing to them of fearful heart, be strong and fear not; for the high ones of authority shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall lick the dust like serpents. The proud lords amongst us buy up the dastard hirelings with gold and silver, and they clothe them in their livery! They wear the badge of cruelty and oppression in their hats; but we shall tread them down like the mire in the streets. Our king, too, is in bondage, and heareth not the groans of them that are in fetters!—for he is encompassed by the cold and the cruel—but the cold and the cruel shall be swept away. As the gathering of locusts shall we run upon them. Tithes shall cease;—the bondman shall be enfranchised; and the lands apportioned at an easy rent. The proud and rich prelates shall give up their wealth to the sick and the poor, and we will have no clergy henceforth but the order of mendicant priests to administer the sacraments." Thus, and with much more of the doctrine of general enfranchisement and equalization of property harangued the monk; and we need scarcely add, that his words were listened to with breathless eagerness.

In fact, so much was he regarded as a prophet, that more than one life had been sacrificed since the commencement of his wanderings, in resisting his capture by the civil authorities.

It was about a fortnight subsequent to this harangue at St. Albans, that John Ball, who had passed on through London, preaching and gaining proselytes in his journey, inhaled, once again, the air of his native valley. His heart bounded, and then sank coldly in his breast, as, on ascending a hill, Winchcombe, with its church, its habitations, and the abbey, that had once been his home, burst upon his sight. It was rather singular, that though the enfranchisement of the bondmen of Sudley had been his darling wish, nay, that even the thought of personal freedom beyond that barony had never crossed his mind until the night of his rude expulsion from Kennington, those very villeins should be the last into whose sluggish veins he should strive to enforce a portion of the warmth that inflamed his own. And yet it was not that the enfranchisement of Sudley was less dear to his heart than it had been; but it was because that little spot of earth was dear to him, that he shrunk from visiting it. He had been there respected and beloved; there, too, had he been degraded and insulted; and that degradation, and that insult, had not been wiped away, and he cared not to appear before his own people thus morally cast down. But the hour had now come. Leycester, the dyer of Norwich, had been appointed king of the commons of Norfolk. Other leaders, too, had been named; and his own native barony must not slumber inert while the rest were running the race.

The shadows of evening were deepening, and the monk still stood gazing upon the town, and living over again the past, when a female with an infant in her arms, and leading a child by the hand, passed by. But she again turned to look upon him, first timidly, then more confidently, till snatching her hand from the slight grasp of the child, she sprung towards him, and sinking at his feet, caught his right hand in both hers, and pressed it to her bosom.

"My sister!" said the monk, bending over her, and blessing her; and after a moment, during which he calmed the agitation of his feelings, he added—"How has it fared with you? Where is Stephen?"

But Margaret was many minutes ere she could do more than kiss his hand, and wet it with her tears. At length, when her emotions of joy and surprise had in some degree subsided, she replied, that Holgrave was still living a villein at Sudley.

"What!" exclaimed the monk—"the smith was indeed told that treachery had betrayed him into the baron's power; but is he chained to the spot—that for three long years he should bear the oppressor's rod?"

"No," replied Margaret: "he would have found some means of getting to the forest; but they hold the villeins bound for him—if he flies, all they possess of crops or cattle will be seized. But here is Stephen. I was just going over the hill to meet him, when I saw you."

Holgrave approached, and was scarcely less surprised than Margaret had been; and when he spoke of the report current, that it was the monk

who had gone about striving to burst the chains of bondage, John Ball replied —

"Listen to me, Stephen Holgrave! I went in before the great ones of the land; before him who is appointed ruler of the people, to demand justice; and because I was of the blood of the bond, my prayer was rejected! — because I was born in bondage I was unworthy of the privilege of the free. The finger pointed, the lip scorned, and the tongue derided; and I was driven, amidst the jeers of the scoffer, from the palace of the king. But as I went forth, the spirit came upon me, and I vowed that I would not give rest to my feet until the bondman's fetters should be broken! And they shall be broken! A spirit has been roused that they reck not of — a spirit that will neither slumber nor sleep until he, whose first breath was drawn beneath the thatch of the villein-hut, shall be as free to come and to go as he whose first pillow was of the cygnet's down! — and no man shall say to him, what dost thou?"

But it was not merely Holgrave that the monk was now addressing; two or three passers-by had been attracted. The monk was recognized, and these were commissioned to whisper secretly in the bondman's ear, that he who had baptized their children, and breathed the prayer of faith over their sick beds, and who had wandered through the land, gladdening with the bright promises of hope the soul of the weary and the oppressed, had come once more amongst them to speak of personal enfranchisement, and of rent, instead of the accustomed service for the land they might hold. Father John then withdrew with Holgrave

by a private path, to avoid any further interruption.

At an early hour the next morning, it was intimated to Calverley that the barony was all in motion — that the bondmen, and, indeed, all of the labouring class, were gathering, and whispering to each other, and evincing any thing but a disposition to commence their customary toil. These things certainly gave evidence of some extraordinary sensation; and Calverley's first inquiry was, "had any one seen the prophet?" — for such was the appellation by which John Ball was distinguished. No positive information could be obtained; the fact could be merely inferred, and the steward, who was not one to hesitate when an idea struck him, ordering a few retainers to attend him, proceeded to Holgrave's abode. But Holgrave was from home; there was no trace of the monk; and Calverley, knowing that it would be to little purpose to question Margaret, bethought him that the inquisitive Mary Byles might probably be the most proper person to apply to. From those who had crossed his path, he had merely been able to extract a sullen negative: but so well had the secret been kept, that the steward's interrogatory was the first intimation she had received of the probability of John Ball's being in the neighbourhood. However, Mary volunteered, provided Calverley would remain a few minutes, to collect some information. Presently, she returned — John Ball was, indeed, at Sudley! She had herself seen him come out of a cottage; she had beheld him harangue some bondmen who were awaiting his appearance, and after many impas-

sioned words, he had gone on publicly through Winchcombe, with the blessings of the enthusiastic peasantry accompanying him. Calverley started at this information.

"Did you see Holgrave?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes," replied Mary; "he was by the monk when he stood at the door of the villein's hut, and I dare say he is with him now."

Calverley paused an instant. De Boteler and the baroness were in London — De Boteler, assisting in the councils of Richard, and Isabella, by reason of a vow, that, should there be again a probability of her becoming a mother, she would not trust the life of her child within the walls of Sudley castle; — and he remembered the strict injunction his lord had given him in the case of the disinterment of Edith, not to presume to act again without his authority. He remembered also that he had been much dissatisfied with the result of father John's imprisonment, and also with the mode adopted for recovering Holgrave: but the present was a moment that would warrant decisive measures — so he proceeded to the door, and desired the retainers to follow on to Winchcombe, and seize the monk. But there was an evident unwillingness to obey: the name of John Ball had spread through the land, and there was so much of misty brightness encircling it — so many strange stories were told of him — so mysterious were often his appearings and disappearings — and so high was the veneration his novel doctrines inspired — that even the lawless retainer shrank from periling his soul by molesting so sanctified a being. Besides, the former assault was not forgotten, with all

the strange exaggerations which had seemed to render miraculous the circumstance of a handful of men liberating a prisoner.

"My lord has little to expect from the faith of those who are fed and clothed at his hand," said Calverley, indignantly, as he saw, by the hesitation of the retainers, that the capture of the monk was hopeless.

"I would fight for my lord any day," muttered one; "but I don't like meddling with a priest."

"And one, too, who prophesies," said another.

"Peace, babblers!" interrupted Calverley: "my lord shall hear how his retainers act when a seditious shaveling is inciting the villeins to revolt. Are you afraid of meddling with Stephen Holgrave?" he added, looking, with a sneer, at the first speaker.

"I am afraid of no man!" he replied, doggedly.

"Come on then? Let us at least secure *him*," cried Calverley, bounding forward and followed by the retainers. They hastened on through Winchcombe, and, a little beyond the town, descried the prophet surrounded by a multitude consisting, not only of the men of Winchcombe, who took an interest in the subject, but of numbers residing far beyond.

Calverley pressed forward towards the crowd, and so powerful is the influence of habitual obedience, that he was actually in the midst of them before any disposition to arrest his progress was manifested. But then arose the cry of "The holy father! —the prophet!" and the retainer, who had replied to Calverley, perceiving from the popular move-

ment, the error into which the people had fallen, shouted out "Stand back, men! we will not harm a hair of the prophet's head!—it is Stephen Holgrave we want."

"And will you allow Stephen Holgrave, who has tarried a willing prisoner —"

"No! no! no!" from a hundred voices, overpowered the address of John Ball.

"Away! Holgrave, away! we hold you free!" And Holgrave, taking advantage of the opportunity, withdrew from the side of John Ball, and springing on the back of an offered steed, was presently beyond reach of pursuit, even had pursuit been attempted.

But Calverley was so mortified on being thus baffled, and so thoroughly convinced of the inutility of opposing the popular feeling, that he made no attempt to force a passage through the clubs and staves that were marshalled before him; he turned away towards Sudley, vowing, however, within himself, that the villeins generally, but more particularly those whom his quick glance had identified, should suffer for that morning's contumacy.

The excitement and enthusiasm, which had freed Holgrave, was still glowing in the breasts of the crowd, when a single horseman was observed on the summit of the hill at a short distance, galloping on with the fleetness of the wind. He was scarcely heeded at first, but when another and another, following with the same headlong speed, successively appeared, the attention of the people was arrested; and when the horse of the first rider, reeking with foam and sweat, sunk down, within a few yards

of the mass, and the man, after struggling an instant, disengaged his legs and leaped in amongst them, exclaiming in a voice scarcely audible from agitation, "Save me! save me! save a poor debtor from prison!—from selling himself to pay his debts!—save me to work as a free man and pay all!"—the fever of excitement seemed to have reached its climax. Without considering an instant what manner of man he might be, they closed around him, and pressing the exhausted wretch towards the monk, vowed to resist to the death any attempts to arrest him. It was in vain that the pursuers, who had now come up, stated that the fugitive was not a debtor, but a notorious perjurer who had fled from Gloucester to avoid his trial: their assertions were not attended to. The populace felt, that in their united strength, they could protect as well as free; and it is almost a question if they would at the moment, have given up the man had his guilt been proved to a demonstration. However, as it was merely a matter of opinion which to believe,—the pursuers or the pursued, the result need scarcely be told; the fugitive was hedged round with men and weapons, and the horsemen, after uttering many an idle threat, rode on to Sudley Castle to call upon the steward to assist in his recapture. The accused marked their course; and, after breathing out the most fervent gratitude to his preservers, he approached John Ball, and, bending his head, said, in a subdued tone,

"How have I desired to behold the prophet—who hath risen up to be the champion of the oppressed. My breast burned within me when I saw

the poor man trampled on. I sheltered a bondman — I was vexed with the law — stripped of my all — beggared, and nothing left me but bondage or a jail! — I am weary of the hard hand that presses down the poor! Holy father, let me join the good cause."

John Ball saw at a glance that the man was above the vulgar, and rejoicing that he could add one intelligent being to the illiterate mass who had become converts to his doctrines, he gladly accepted the offer of an ally who promised to be so serviceable; and, apprehensive that as the hour for a simultaneous rising had not yet come, a further display might rather injure than benefit the cause, pronounced a benediction over the multitude, and promising to appear soon among them again, desired each man to go to his regular business, and remain quiet till the appointed hour. He then took the arm of his new colleague, and hurried him to a secret opening in an adjacent quarry.

In the individual thus opportunely rescued, the reader will probably recognize Black Jack. He had been detected in a conspiracy, from which, had his character been already taintless, there would have been but little chance of escape. But as matters really stood, the slightest shadow of guilt would have been made to assume a form sufficiently tangible to convict *him*.

On the second evening after, when Calverley was in his private sitting room, the door was thrown suddenly open.

"Hist! master Calverley," said Black Jack, entering abruptly, yet noiselessly. "Don't be frightened, it is only Jack Oakley; — nay, nay, we

don't part so" (springing between Calverley and the door, as the steward, upon recognizing the intruder, had made an effort to pass from the room); — "nay, nay, steward, we don't part company so soon;" and drawing a dagger from his bosom, and seizing Calverley in his muscular grasp, he forced him back to his seat. "You had more relish," continued he, "for an interview yesterday morning, when you led on the pack to hunt for poor Black Jack! but *he* had escaped you — yes, *he* had escaped you," (speaking between his set teeth, and looking as if it would do his heart good to plunge the weapon he was fingering in Calverley's bosom.) "Did you think," he added, after a moment's pause, during which he had replaced the dagger within his vest — "did you think Black Jack knew so little of you as to trust his life in your hands, when he saw the blood-hounds making for Sudley? No, no — I knew too well that Thomas Calverley, instead of whispering to the retainers that I was a hireling of the Lord of Sudley, would give the assistance my enemies asked — and you did! — yes, you did;" and his hand, as if instinctively, was again upon the hilt of his dagger, as he looked for a moment at Calverley with the glaring eye, set teeth, and suppressed breath of one who has resolved upon some bloody deed. But the temptation passed away; — the rigid features relaxed, and withdrawing his hand from his bosom, and humming a snatch from some popular air, he walked up to the window.

The reader will readily imagine that this was a relief to Calverley. Even a dagger in the hands of a man possessing the physical strength of Black

Jack, was not a weapon to be looked upon with indifference, especially by an unarmed and surprised man. But Calverley, adroitly availing himself of the evident change of purpose in Black Jack, said, in as stern a voice as he could command, "This is strange conduct, master Oakley!"

"'Tis so, steward," returned Black Jack, speaking in his usually self-confident tone;—"I dare say you do think it strange that a man should steal into this castle, and hide himself for two or three hours, on purpose to scare you out of your wits; but it was not to threaten, or frighten you either, I have come."

"For what purpose, then?"

"For money; and for what money will buy — drink. Have you any wine in the room?"

"No, but I will fetch you some directly."

"Thank you, steward," replied Oakley, smiling, "but I would rather wait a few minutes. To be sure, it is a hard thing to be fasting from drink for two whole days! but then it is better than being a prisoner. We will be good friends, master Calverley, but we will not put too much faith in one another. And, as for taking your life — an idea which did occur to me just now — by the green wax! I don't think I could do it. To be sure, sometimes an odd fit comes upon me, but I believe, after all, the pen suits my hand better than the sword; nevertheless, to come to the point, steward, I must have money. I am going to turn an honest man; to gain the bondman his freedom, and the free man justice. You need not smile, for I have sworn to be a leader of the people."

"And I suppose Holgrave has sworn, too," sneered Calverley.

"I believe not; I have heard nothing as yet of his being a leader; but I left the monk this morning under pretence of rousing the villeins about Cotswold hills, and so managed to get here."

"Do you know any thing of Holgrave's route?"

"He is gone to London."

"To London!"

"Yes—will you let his wife follow him?"

"Let his wife follow him!" repeated Calverley, looking at Oakley with unaffected astonishment; but instantly recollecting himself, he added—"I don't know;" and again, after pausing a moment, continued—"You, of course, do not mean to keep faith with that seditious monk?" looking with a scrutinizing glance at Oakley.

"By the green wax, but I do! I can never practise my own calling again; and, at any rate, have tried cheating, and lying, and so on, long enough—and what have I got by them?—the honestest blockhead in England cannot be worse off than John Oakley! So, as I have said, I shall e'en try what honesty will do! Besides, I owe them something for saving me from the gallows. But I cannot do without drink!—and drink, except a beggarly cup of ale or so, is not to be had among them—and so, steward, you must give me money."

"Yes, yes, you shall have money, Oakley, and I tell you, that if you could manage to send me intimation, from time to time, of the plots they are forming, you shall have as much as you desire."

Oakley, as Calverley ceased speaking, looked at him for a moment very earnestly, and an intelligence passed across his face, as if some new light

had broken in upon him; but suddenly, with a sort of smile,—

"By the green wax!" said he, "you seem to think lightly of Black Jack's promises! What! you would bribe me to betray their secrets, would you? One never thinks of doing well, but some temptation is sure to come across.—Come, come, give me the money—I shall think of what you have said another time.—Come, come, I can hardly speak for very drought!"

Calverley had no alternative but compliance: but it was provoking almost beyond endurance to have a creature who annoyed him so much, completely, as it were, in his power, and yet be unable to avail himself of the circumstance. There was no alternative, however; for, as we have said before, he was unarmed, and, withal, no fighting man. His chamber was retired, and the extortioner a desperate, unprincipled being, and so Calverley doled out a few pieces of silver, and a piece of gold, which Black Jack snatching up, departed; but as he closed the door, a chuckling laugh, and a drawn bolt, told Calverley that he was overreached by his wily confederate.

The signs of strong excitement became every day more general and more evident, especially in the counties of Kent, Essex, Hertford, and Norfolk. The furbishing of weapons; the whetting and sharpening of hand-bills, wood-knives, and other offensive implements of husbandry; and the general relaxation, and in many places total suspension of labour, were like the heavings and the tremblings which betokened an approaching shock. Indeed, in many places partial risings had already

commenced; but these had originated rather with the free than the bond: rather in resisting the obnoxious tax than in asserting a right to freedom; and the more timid and least influential of the gentry, unable to control the popular movement, had already shut themselves up in their mansions or castles, leaving to the government the task of stemming the storm. Even Richard and his council became alarmed; and after issuing a few proclamations, and a commission of trail baron to try the rioters, awaited the event, trusting to the want of organization among the people for a successful termination of the outbreak.

Affairs had put on this gloomy aspect, the frown of contemptuous suspicion being met by the glance of sullen defiance, and each man of the commonalty either in league with his neighbour or regarding him with distrust, when a meeting of those, who, under the powerful influence of John Ball, had fomented all this disorder, took place at Maidstone. It was on a June evening, and just as the twilight had thrown a kind of indistinctness over every object, that Wat Turner, who had been lying for the last hour along a bench in the chimney-corner, to all outward appearance soundly asleep, suddenly started up —

"Is the room ready, Bridget?" he abruptly asked his wife.

"To be sure it is," replied Bridget, who was sitting at the open casement of the large apartment, decked out in all her Sunday finery; "but see, Wat, I declare you have upset my beautiful flowers," as Turner, without heeding the variegated sweets

that graced the fireless hearth, brushed past them, and stood upon the earthen floor.

"Confound you, and your flowers! — you are sure every thing is in order?"

"Yes — didn't I tell you so this moment?" answered Bridget, rising somewhat indignantly, and replacing the flower-pot in its original position. "And trouble enough I have had," she continued, "to get in the table and the chairs, and the benches, and stools, and put the place so that it might be fit to be seen, all by myself. A fine holiday the wench has got! — but she shall work for this next week! — How many are coming?"

"Question me not, Bridget," replied Turner, in a very serious tone; "but for once in your life try if you can hold your tongue; or, at any rate, say only what is wanted. Do you remember what I told you? Keep the door bolted; and when you hear a knock, say, 'With whom hold you;' and if they answer, 'With king Richard and the true commons,' open the door; but mind you open it to none else."

"Yes, yes, I will mind: but I verily believe you think me a fool, or a woman who don't know when to hold her tongue! — you tell me one thing so many times over! Wat — is that John Leicester coming?"

"Yes."

"How I hate the sight of that man! he is so full of consequence, and has so many airs, and talks so much about what he will do when he is king of Norfolk; — just as if an honest blacksmith was not as good as a dyer any day! Or, as if Wat Turner (Wat Tyler, I mean) — I declare I often

catch myself going to call you Turner in the shop, — aye, as if Wat Tyler wasn't as good a name as John Leicester! And then he talks about his wife, too. I'll let him see when you are king of Kent."

"Silence! there is a knock." Turner went to the door: "With whom hold you?" he asked.

"With King Richard and the true Commons," was the reply; and the door was instantly unclosed, and John Leicester, a tall, pale complexioned man, with an aquiline visage and sharp black eyes, accompanied by Ralph Rugge, John Kirkby, and Allan Theoder, entered the apartment.

"Ye are the first, my friends," said Turner, cordially grasping the extended hand of Leicester, "and, by St. Nicholas! it is is now getting fast on for ten o'clock."

He then strode across the room, and, throwing open a door, ushered his colleagues into a place probably used by Bridget as a sort of store-room, of moderate size, with clay walls, and an earthen floor. A large iron lamp was burning on an oblong table of considerable dimensions that stood in the centre. At the upper end of the table was a chair and stools, and benches were arranged round in proper order.

"Bridget," said Turner, stepping back, "where is the wine?"

"Oh! here — I forgot the wine," said Bridget, handing in a large jug, and then again returning with a number of drinking cups and another measure of wine. Turner placed the liquor on the table, and was just filling some of the cups, when Stephen Holgrave, Thomas Sack, and three others,

pushed open the door, and, after a brief salutation, took their seats at the table.

"Here is a health to King Richard and the true commons!" said Holgrave, taking up his cup.

"We have had enough of kings," said Kirkby, "and lords too—I will drink to none but the true commons!"

"Why, as for kings," said Turner, "I am not sure; Richard is but a boy yet, and his father was a ——"

"I say we will have no Richard, and no king but King of the Commons, and these we will have in every shire in England!" interrupted John Leicester.

Turner looked as if he thought that he had as much right to deliver his sentiments as the dyer of Norwich, and was about to vindicate his opinions, probably in no very qualified terms, when Black Jack entering, accompanied by a few others, diverted the smith's attention.

"Hah! Jack Straw—welcome!" said Turner; "you see you are not the last. The night is waning, and our friends are not all here yet."

A horn of wine being handed to Oakley, he took his seat at the table; and when about a dozen men had joined them,

"Jack Straw," inquired Turner, "have you made out the conditions?"

"Yes," replied Black Jack, "here they are," drawing a parchment from his pocket.

"Read them! read them! let us hear!" burst from the party; and Oakley began—.

"First.—The king shall be required to free all bondmen."

"Aye, aye!" shouted the confederates, "that will do—that is the first thing that must be done."

"Secondly," resumed Oakley, "to pardon all the risings."

"Pardon!" interrupted Turner—"there is no pardon wanted: let them do as they ought to do, and there will be no rising."

"Thirdly.—That all men may buy and sell in any city or town in England."

"Aye," said Rugge, "that is as it should be—I know where I could carry all the hats I could make, and sell them for a good price, if I were but free of the place."

"Fourthly.—That all lands should be rented at fourpence an acre."

"Aye, and enough too!" said Turner; "and, mind ye, nothing but rent—no service. Let every man be free to work, and get money for his work, and give money for his land, and know what he has to pay: I don't like your services—so many days' labour, or so much corn, or so many head of cattle, and so on: and then, if any thing happens that he fails to the very day, though the land should have been held by his great-grandfather, why he has no claim to it! 'Tis time all this should be done away with.—But now go on with the rest."

"That was all we agreed upon to ask for," replied Black Jack, looking round upon his associates.

"What!" said the overbearing Leicester, looking fiercely at the ex-foreman—"didn't I tell you that *I* was to be the King of Norfolk, and Wat Tyler——"

"Tush, man!—nonsense!" interrupted Turner, reddening with mingled shame and anger. "Let the bondman be freed, and the land properly parcelled out, and then we can talk about what kings there are to be besides Richard. But I'll tell you, Master Jack Straw, or whatever your name is, that if I cannot read and write like you, I will have a word in the matter as well as yourself—I will have all the lawyers hanged, for one thing: there is so much trickery in the law, that we shall never be sure of whatever is granted, while the men of law can have a crook in it."

"And since we talk of hanging," said Turner, "there is one—" and he looked significantly at Holgrave—"but, never mind; his time will come, Stephen!"

"It will!" answered Holgrave, emphatically; and, as he acquiesced in Turner's implied threat, a smile might be detected on Oakley's lips.

"Friends," said Allan Theoder, speaking for the first time, "I do not hear you say any thing about this tax."

"If we had no king," said Kirkby, "we should have no tax grinding down the poor. If that tax had not made a beggar of me, Jack Kirkby would not have been here amongst you this night."

"But what is it," asked Black Jack, "that I shall add to the parchment?"

"That we shall have no taxes!" said the taciturn Theoder.

"And no king!" added Kirkby.

"And that the lords shall give up their castles, and keep no retainers, and that all the lawyers shall be hanged!" said Turner.

"I tell you," said Leicester, "that when we are all kings, we can do what we like with the lords and the lawyers, and ——"

"And I will tell you, John Leicester, that if it is my will which is to decide, we will have no king but one; and that one shall be Richard. And that all lawyers and escheators, shall lose their heads — aye, by St. Nicholas! and that before four days are gone, the laws shall proceed from my mouth!" interrupted the smith, rising from his stool and striking the table violently with his clenched fist."

While Turner was thus declaiming, a singular looking being, who sat directly opposite to him, had risen, and, evidently quite unmoved by the vehemence of the smith's manner, and equally regardless of the matter of his speech, only awaited until a pause should enable him to commence his own. The man was about five feet two in height, with thick lips and a short turned-up nose, black, bushy brows, overhanging a pair of twinkling grey eyes, and a bald head, receding abruptly from the eyebrows, like those of the lower animals. The moment Turner ceased speaking, the man began, in a deep guttural voice —

"I was brought up there, Wat Tyler, and I can tell you of two places where it can be fired."

"What! Gloucester?"

"What! Sudley Castle?" asked Black Jack and Turner, at once.

"No — the city of London!"

"The city of London!" repeated Turner in a tone that implied little approval of the suggestion.

"Yes — the city of London, friend Tyler," said

Thomas Sack, in that peculiar tone of confidence which says, I know what I say is the best that can be said.—"Yes, the City of London, friend Tyler; and when the city is fired, and the Londoners are running here and there, to save their houses and goods, what will hinder us from taking the Tower, and forcing the king to grant what we ask?"

There seemed reason in this—and Black Jack's imagination instantly picturing the facility which such a thing would afford for the appropriation of the good citizen's treasures, seizing the idea, said quickly—

"By the green wax! our friend counsels well."

"He does counsel well," rejoined one at the bottom of the table. Would it not be a fine opportunity to pay ourselves for all they have taken from us?" he added, in a lower key, and looking cunningly round upon his companions as he put the interrogatory.

"What!" said Turner, sternly, "would you make us robbers!"

"Robbers! Master Tyler, no—no—it is one thing to rob, and another to repay yourself, if the chance comes in your way, if you have been cheated."

"I do not understand your one thing or your other thing;" answered Turner—"but I know this, that we have paid the tax, and that we will pay it no more—but as for touching what belongs to the London folks—I'll tell you what, if we do set fire to London, by St. Nicholas! if I see my own son Tom taking a penny's worth, I will fling him into the flames!"

"You are right," said Holgrave, "we want to be free men, not plunderers."

The man did not reply, and Black Jack, congratulating himself that he had prudently kept his own counsel, endeavoured to turn the attention of the leaders from the consequences to the cause. Holgrave positively refused to sanction the contemplated firing: "No man," said he, "has a right to burn what does not belong to him." But he was only one man, and the sense of abstract justice was not sufficiently strong in those about him, to overbalance the advantages that might result from the deed. Certainly, to speak the truth, Turner hesitated some time before he assented, but the pithy language of Thomas Sack, and the covert insinuations of the lettered Oakley, overpowered his better judgment, and the thing was decided upon.

"Hallo — confederates! you have forgotten one thing, which, after all, may do us more good than all the conditions put together. What think ye of burning all the deeds and court-rolls of manors we can lay our hands on? The knaves will find it no easy matter to prove their title to the land, or to the rent or to the bondman either."

Twenty brawny hands grasped successively that of the spokesman, and an applauding murmur ran through the meeting.

"Aye, aye, burn the court-rolls — burn the court-rolls!" ran from mouth to mouth. "We defy the lords to claim rent or service then."

"Yes," cried Holgrave, starting up eagerly, "if the court-rolls are burned, who can claim the bondman?"

"Aye, or, as you said just now, Jack Straw, who can say to his vassal 'You owe me this service or that service,'" added the smith.

This proposition was then eagerly adopted and decided upon without a dissentient voice.

The reader may, perhaps, be surprised that all this should pass without eliciting either opposition or remark from the king of Norfolk; but the fact was, that Leicester, although in general a very temperate man, had been so much pleased with the flavour of Wat Turner's wine, and had so often replenished his cup that he had not been, for the last half hour, precisely in a situation either to combat or agree to any proposition. Indeed, had any of the members been bold enough to submit a motion, depriving him of his kingship elect, it is a question if he would have resisted, so much was the natural arrogance and asperity of his temper softened by the genial beverage.

The wine, too, began to exhibit many other of the confederates in colours very different from such as they had at first shewn, but the change generally was not such as was wrought in Leicester; — for vindictive cruelty and selfish rapacity might now be detected in many of those who, at the outset, had spoken only of justice and right. Then, too, were put forth the claims which each fancied he possessed of ranking above his fellows. "Did not I provide so many clubs or spears — or, did not I or my father, or uncle," as the case might be, "give so much corn to make bread — or so much silk to make a banner — or so much leather to make jacks," &c.

"And have not I," said Turner, whom an extra

cup had made more than usually a braggart; "Have not I forged as many spear-heads as ye can find handles for? and has not John Tickle, the London doublet-maker, made me sixty as stout leathern doublets as man could wish to wear? and can I not bring the tough sinews of the brave Kentish men to strike down the hirelings of that foul council which has brought all this misery on the people? — and will ye talk of your pitiful gifts? Am not I the right hand of the prophet? ——"

"The prophet disdains the aid of the boaster!" said John Ball, walking up to the chair which had stood so long empty, and looking sternly round upon the confederates. "Is it thus that ye talk when ye assemble? Are wine-bibbers, and railers, and boasters, to lead the people to justice? Is the bondman to put off his yoke by means of those who contend for the highest places? Shame! — shame to ye!" and his eye rested upon Turner.

For an instant, as the monk spoke, the smith's cheek glowed, and he thought it was not kindly done to reprove, in so marked a manner, one who, through rescuing him, had been compelled to fly like a felon, and assume a name that did not belong to his father. However, he had been accustomed to pay implicit obedience to the monk.

"Father John," said he, "it was not for the sake of boasting I spoke: what Wat Turner does, he does because he thinks it is right. I ought to have said Wat Tyler," he added, recollecting himself and looking round; "but the truth will out, and there's no use in making a secret. Some of ye do know the truth already, and some do not:

but, however, I 'll now tell ye, that because in a quarrel I happened to kill one of Lord de Boteler's retainers, I came here to Maidstone and took the name of poor old Wat Tyler, my mother's brother — peace to his soul! and made the folks believe that I was a sort of a runaway son."

"And if you had never known me," said Holgrave, starting up and grasping Turner's hand, "you need not have changed your name: but you are an honest man, let you be called what you may — and Stephen Holgrave will never forget what you have done for him and his."

John Ball, whatever he may have felt, had too much good sense to weaken his ascendancy by making any acknowledgment. If he was the soul of the confederacy — Wat Turner, or Tyler, as we shall henceforward call him, was the body; — he might inspire the thought, but Tyler must direct the physical movement: and, therefore, it was absolutely requisite that the smith should in himself set the wholesome example of being amenable to discipline. The monk, therefore, without further comment, began to ask of their capabilities, their resources, and arrangements; and it was finally agreed upon, after much deliberation, that Tyler should command the Kentish division, and Jack Oakley, or, as he now chose to style himself, Jack Straw (probably from the then custom of bailiffs wearing straws in their hats), the bodies that were to march upon London from Essex.

"But — remember!" added John Ball, impressively, and, rising from his seat, as did all who were assembled; "remember that ye do not slay except in self-defence; and that, above all things,

ye hold sacred the Lord's anointed. And may *He*," elevating his eyes and hands, "who inspired the thought — bless the deed! The first hour of the sabbath-morn has just struck, — let us not trespass farther on the holy day. — Depart in peace."

The monk then left the apartment, and the confederates presently retired.

CHAPTER VI.

But, despite the prophet's injunction, the tumultuary rising commenced with blood. The courts of trail baron were dispersed, and at Stamford the jurors beheaded, and their heads borne on lances to overawe those who might be inclined to arrest the progress of the insurgents; every building suspected of containing court-rolls was searched; all the documents found were destroyed, and the villeins met with, in the line of march, pronounced free and incited to join the popular insurrection. Their numbers were thus increased every mile of ground they passed over, till, at length, the whole mass amounted to one hundred thousand able-bodied men. It is impossible to say what such a force might not have effected, had there been a proper degree of subordination kept up among the led, or a proper degree of confidence and understanding among the leaders: but, as is usual in popular commotions, the reverse of this was the case. No one chose to occupy the lowest place, and each thought he could direct movements and affairs much better than the actual leader. Hence arose

endless contentions and secessions, till at length from want of the grand principle of adhesion — unanimity, the vast body threatened to fall asunder, as if crushed by its own weight.

These things, however, gave little concern to the worthy who commanded the Kentish division. Tyler, though an excellent blacksmith, possessed few of the qualities requisite for forming a good general. Provided there was no very sensible diminution in the number of his followers, he cared not a straw for the score or two who, after quarrelling, or perhaps fighting, withdrew in such disgust that they vowed rather to pay the full tax for ever than submit to the insolence of the rebels. One man could fight as well as another, reasoned he; and, provided *he* was obeyed, what mattered it by whom. Dick went and Tom came — it was sure to be all one in the end.

Oakley, on the other hand, although, perhaps, equally arrogant when invested with this novel and temporary power, was more plausible, and managed to keep up a better understanding among his followers than Tyler. This sort of conciliatory conduct was, in a great measure, forced upon him by the circumstance of Leicester being immediately next him in command, and by the wish he had that no ill feelings against himself might weaken his authority when any favourable opportunity offered of reaping a golden harvest.

He knew that he had little co-operation to expect from Leicester, for independently of the personal enmity of the latter, which would rather induce opposition than support, the chief of Norfolk had not a particle of rapacity in his composition.

Indeed, it is not often that he whose gaze is fixed upon some bold elevation, will stoop to rake in mire, even when sure of discovering gold. Leicester, was very indignant at thus becoming a subordinate, but the election of the prophet was decisive, and he was compelled to submit: for John Ball, seeing that one so rash and haughty, was not adapted to possess the unlimited control to which his influence, and the sacrifices he had made, seemed to entitle him; resolved that his indiscretion should be kept in check by the prudence and intelligence of Oakley.

The Essex division had marched on until within about three miles of the city of London, and here they halted, partly through fatigue and partly to interchange communications with the Kentish men; it having been determined, that while the latter where forcing a passage over London-bridge, the men of Essex should, at the same moment, effect an entrance by the east gate, and thus distract the attention of the citizens.

In the motley crowd, of nearly sixty thousand men, the most conspicuous figure was, perhaps, John Leicester himself, cased in a complete suit of steel armour, (taken as lawful spoil from some castle in the route) waving in the sun a bright Damascus scimitar, while he gave directions, in an authoritative tone, to a peasant who was unloosing the trappings of a large black horse, from which Leicester had just alighted. Standing at a short distance from him, John Oakley, otherwise Jack Straw, formed an adjunct little less important in the picturesque of the scene. Unwilling to incumber himself with armour, his portly person was de-

fended by a leathern jack, covered over with a thick quilting of crimson silk, dagger proof; and in this guise, he contrasted well with the monk clad in dark woollen, with whom he was engaged in conversation — although turning every now and then, his large blue eyes towards a tempting display of eatables and wine profusely spread under the shade of a tree. A cluster of formidable-looking men in tough leathern jacks, were laying aside their hand-bills and swords and dividing the contents of a large satchel. There was a group variously armed and accoutred, some wearing the shirt of mail with the yew-tree bow in their hands and quivers of arrows at their backs; and others in doublets of leather or freize, with swords, some rusty and some bright, or staves, or sharp-pointed clubs, or reaping hooks, or wood-knives.

The arrival of such a body as the Essex men, so near the city, and the approach of the Kentish men, was, of course, no secret to those who inhabited the Tower, but there was no standing army ready, at a moment's notice, to march out and oppose their progress. They had, indeed, six hundred archers within the Tower, but it was considered the most prudent course not to send them forth, lest, while they were attacking one division, another might come on and make themselves masters of the strong hold. Many of the nobles who resided beyond the city walls fled from their dwellings to seek a refuge in the Tower, and among these Roland de Boteler, at his lady's earnest entreaty, withdrew with her, from his mansion just beyond Bishopgate, and sought a temporary shelter within the fortress.

Isabella was sitting in an an apartment with the fair Joan of Kent, expatiating upon the insolence of the common people, and detailing a solitary instance of the evil that the family of a bondman might work to his lord, when the door was thrown open and Richard, with his beautiful countenance flushed with excitement, and followed by the archbishop of Canterbury, abruptly entered.

"We are resolved, my lord bishop," said Richard, as he threw himself on a seat by his mother; and, turning to an attendant, commanded that the royal barge should be instantly in readiness.

"You surely do not intend leaving the Tower," asked the queen-mother apprehensively.

"Madam," said Sudbury, with some heat, "his grace has so determined; and, moreover, contrary to the advice of his noble cousins and councillors, he will go down the river and parley with the villeins!"

The impetuosity of sixteeen was not to be turned aside fiom its purpose by the remonstrances of the archbishop, or even the entreaties of a mother. Isabella, too, ventured to expostulate, but without effect; and, accompanied by Thomas of Woodstock, his uncle, Sir Robert Hales, the treasurer, the Earl of Oxford, De Boteler, and Simon Sudbury; who, though reprobating his majesty's conduct, generously resolved to share its consequences. Richard stepped into the royal barge with the most sanguine hopes of quelling the insurrection.

The order had been so suddenly given that there was no intimation of the sovereign's excursion until the royal barge met the eye, consequently there was none of that excitement usual upon the most

simple movements of royalty. Indeed, at any rate, the attention of all classes was, at this moment, so occupied by the Commons, that the king was scarcely thought of.

They had rowed about a mile down the river, when the chancellor, who was gazing with vacant eyes, but an occupied mind, upon the water, had his attentions suddenly fixed.

"Does your grace see that little boat just before us?"

"Yes," replied Richard.

"I am much mistaken," resumed Sudbury, quickly, "if that figure in the dark cloak is not he whose evil counsel has spread like a pestilence through the land."

"What! the audacious monk who intruded upon us at Kennington?"

"The same, your grace, if my judgment be correct."

"Let him be instantly seized!" replied the impetuous Richard. The boat was, accordingly, hailed, and John Ball dragged into the barge, and at once identified by Sudley and De Boteler. The monk did not resist either the capture or the bands that were bound around him; neither did he reply to the reproaches that were showered upon him; but silently and unresistingly suffered himself to be thrown into the bottom of the barge.

In a few minutes after this was effected, Richard's quick eye was suddenly attracted by an appearance on the beach.

"By my faith, cousin," said he, addressing Thomas of Woodstock, "yonder are the varlets! Do you see how bravely their pennons are waving,

and how, here and there, among their black heads, something bright glitters in the sun ?"

"That is their weapons, my liege," said Woodstock.

"Stolen from the castles and houses they have plundered," added Sudbury.

"Put to shore quickly," said Richard ; "and let us see if those rebels will dare to appear in harness before their king !"

"You would not venture your sacred person among them, my liege !" cried Sir Robert Hales the treasurer, in alarm.

"What ! think you, sir treasurer," asked De Boteler, "that the knaves, vile as they are, would harm his grace ?"

"My lord baron," said Sudbury, sternly, "it is not well that a man of your experience should speak thus. Give not your countenance to an act that may yet lie heavy upon your soul !" Richard's cheek kindled as the baron stood rebuked ; and with the generous indignation of youth, he said, in a tone of evident displeasure —

"My Lord Bishop, the Baron de Boteler did not counsel us to land : he was only doubting how far the impudence of those commons might go." Sudbury, knowing that soft words might turn away wrath, and perceiving that little good would be effected in the present case by pursuing a different course, suffered Sir Robert Hales to intreat, even as a father would entreat his only son, that the young king should not peril his life by venturing his royal person among those who were up in arms against his authority. But when he saw that Richard's ingenuous mind was touched by the earnest

manner of the treasurer, he then prudently put his own weight into the balance, and the scale turned as he desired.

"Go you, then, my lord of Oxford," said Richard, "since it does not appear wise that we, ourselves, should land, and ask those men why they thus disturb the peace of their sovereign lord the king."

Robert de Vere accordingly, accompanied only by three men at arms, one to act as herald, and two as a sort of body guard, quitted the barge to hold parlance with the rebels.

"Why we are thus up in arms?" said Leicester, without circumlocution, as the herald proclaimed the king's interrogatory,—"why, because those who should command are thought nothing of, and those who do command ought to have their heads struck off."

"This is no meet answer, *Sir Knight*," said Oxford, glancing ironically at Leicester's armour. "You must consider of something more to the matter of his grace's demand, or Robert de Vere can be no messenger."

"Yes, yes, we will consider of some more fitting answer," said Leicester fiercely;—and after consulting earnestly for a few minutes with Jack Straw, Thomas Sack, and other leaders, he returned to De Vere, and said—

"Hear you, Robert de Vere, we demand that all whose names are in that parchment shall be beheaded, because they are enemies to the true Commons, and evil councillors to the king. And when this is done we will let his grace know what else we demand."

Robert de Vere took the scroll from Leicester with a haughty air, and glancing over the contents, without vouchsafing a word, turned away and rejoined the king.

"These knaves wish to carry things with a strong hand, my liege," said the Earl of Oxford, bending his knee as he presented the scroll.

"What!" said Richard, as his eye ran over the characters, "John, duke of Lancaster; Simon Sudbury, lord chancellor; John Fordham, clerk of the privy seal; Sir Robert Hales, treasurer; the bishop of London; Sir Robert Belknap, the chief justice; Sir Ralph Ferrers, and Sir Robert Blessinton. What! is this all the noble blood they wish to spill? By my faith!" he added, trampling the parchment under his foot, "we will listen to nothing more the knaves have to say; and ye may tell them that as they are bondmen so shall they remain; and that as my fathers ruled them with a rod of iron, so shall I rule them with a rod of scorpions."

But this burst of indignation soon passed away, and upon the suggestion of the prudent Sir Robert Hailes, he sent an evasive answer, with a command that the Commons should attend him at Windsor on the Sunday following.

The royal barge then returned to the Tower, and John Ball was again the tenant of a dungeon.

Tyler and his Kentish men were at this time upon Blackheath, awaiting the monk impatiently, who had strictly enjoined that no attack should be made upon London till the word was received from him. The day, however, wore away, and John Ball did not appear. The men grew impatient, but

Tyler, though brooking the delay as ill as the most ardent among them, hesitated to take any decided step until the sanction of the prophet should warrant the deed.

"By St. Nicholas!" cried he at last, "something ill has befallen the holy man, or he would have been here before now. We will march on directly, and find him, or the London folks shall look to it."

This resolution was received with acclamation, and the whole mass moved forward with a quick step. Their direct way would have been to keep as far as was possible the banks of the Thames in view, until they arrived at London Bridge, but Sudbury's palace was at Lambeth, and Tyler, suspecting that the archbishop had some hand in the detention of the monk, vowed that his residence should be burned to the ground if some tidings were not gained of him. On they went, therefore, to Southwark; and with shouts and execrations, and torches flaming in their hands, approached the walls of the episcopal edifice. The gates were forced; the affrighted domestics and retainers fled; and it was well that Tyler, as he rushed on through room and corridor, did not encounter Sudbury; but the prelate being fortunately in the Tower, escaped the rage of the vindictive smith.

"He has been an ill friend to him," said Tyler, "even if he should not have harmed him now," (as a trembling domestic assured him that no prisoner had entered the palace) "and he deserves that his head should be carried on a pole before us to London Bridge."

And when, at length, the intruders were satisfied

that the palace contained neither bishop nor monk, the search commenced for the documents and records. Cabinets were broken open, drawers and boxes forced, and the contents thrown carelessly about; jewels, silk damasks, and gold embroidery, were trampled under foot with as much loss of value through wantonness as if the spoilers had enriched themselves — a thing which, if done at all, was done to so small an extent, that he only who snatched up a gem or a piece of gold could have said that a theft had been committed.

In each apartment the writings found were thrown in a heap, and blazing torches flung upon them. These igniting the flooring and furniture, the building was presently in a blaze in a dozen different directions, and the Kentish men, with as rapid a step as they had approached, marched away, vowing vengeance to all the enemies of their prophet.

It was midnight when they arrived within view of London, but the red tinge in the southern horizon, and the glare of their thousand torches, had warned the citizens of their approach; the gates were shut, and the bridge itself crowded with aroused citizens. Tyler's first command was that they should rush on and set fire to the gates; but Holgrave had seen more of warfare than he, and he knew that, even though they might succeed in passing the bridge, if the citizens were thoroughly provoked, they might, in their narrow streets, occasion much annoyance; he, therefore, counselled Tyler to remain with the men marshalled before the bridge, while three or four, who had some knowledge of the city, and whom he would himself ac-

company, should pass stealthily over the river, and ascertain if their friends on the other side were ready to assist them. Tyler reluctantly agreed to this proposal.

Holgrave and two others then departed from the main body, unloosed a small boat from its moorings, and, in less than five minutes, they were walking, in the twilight of a starry midsummer's night, down the rough stone pathway of Thames-street.

While the guide paused for a moment to recollect the way to the head-quarters of the insurgents, some one who passed was heard speaking in a tone which fell upon Stephen's ear like a sound he ought to remember; he sprang from the side of his comrades, and, standing before the strangers, demanded, "With whom hold you?"

"With King Richard and the true commons!" was the reply. "Is it not Stephen Holgrave?" continued the galleyman, holding out his hand.

"Yes," replied Holgrave, giving it a friendly pressure; "I thought I knew your voice."

"Do you know *my* voice?" asked one of Wells's companions.

"Ah! Merritt, you are the man I wanted— "when did you see father John? can you tell any thing of him?"

"Is not the father with Tyler?" asked Merritt. Holgrave then knew that some mishap must have befallen the monk; and the possibility of his being in the Tower occurred to all.

"Hollo!" cried the galleyman, as, at this moment, a party of men approached—"with whom hold ye, mates?"

"With whom should we hold," said the foremost, "but with King Richard and the true commons?"

"Well met, then," said Wells; "for the true commons are up — no time is to be lost — the prophet is in prison. Let each man steer his own course, muster all the hands he can, and meet on Tower-hill. Hark! that stroke tells one — remember we meet at two, and we will see if the Londoners and men of Kent cannot shake hands before the clock has tolled three."

The galleyman then hurried Holgrave up a narrow dark street, where, tapping gently at a door, it was instantly opened, to Stephen's great surprise, by old Hartwell.

"Is that you, Robin?" said a soft voice; and a female face was seen peeping half way down the stairs.

"Yes, yes; but go, Lucy, and tell that Stephen Holgrave is here."

"What! Stephen Holgrave!" said the warm-hearted Lucy, springing down the stairs; but, light and quick as was her step, another reached the bottom before her, and, with a faint shriek, Margaret Holgrave fell on her husband's neck.

"Father," resumed Wells, "take up that lamp, and we'll get a flask of the best, to drink a health to the rising; and do you, Holgrave, go up and just take a look at your children, and then we must be gone."

"And the strife will begin this night!" said Margaret, fearfully, as Holgrave, bending over the bed, where lay two sleeping children, glanced for an instant at a dark-haired boy of five or six, and

then, taking a little rosy infant of about a twelvemonth in his arms, kissed it, and gazed upon its face with all the delight of a father.

"There will be no strife, Margaret, to-night, or to-morrow. The commons of London are rising to help us, and the king will not hold out when he sees —— but no matter. Tell me how you have fared. When I left Sudley, to join the commons, you were taken charge of by your brother, who, no doubt, placed you here with your friend Lucy, on her marriage with Wells —— "

"Stephen!" said the galleyman, from below.

"Good heavens! I must go. Bless you, Margaret! — bless you! I will see you again soon! May God keep ye both!" Gently laying down the still sleeping babe, he tore himself from the arms of his weeping wife, and rushed down the stairs.

Holgrave had never much reason to boast of the gift of speech, more especially when his feelings were in any wise affected. Even the galleyman was not as eloquent now as upon former occasions, and the two issued forth, and walked on for about five minutes, without exchanging a word. Wells, at length, stopped at a house in the vicinity of St. Bartholomew's Priory, with a heavy, gothic, stone arch; inclosing an iron studded door, and the windows of the first, and still more the second, story projecting so as to cast a strong shadow over the casement of the ground-floor. Wells tapped twice with the hilt of his dagger at the oaken door, which was softly opened, and he and Holgrave entered.

A low, stone passage conducted them into a spacious wainscotted room well lighted, and so full

of company that it was not possible, at a glance, to guess at their number; and here, at the head of a long, narrow table, was Black Jack standing erect on the seat which he should have occupied in a different manner, and, with his eyes dancing, and his nose and cheeks glowing, haranguing the crowd in style of familiar eloquence.

"What, my old friend! what do *you* do here?" said the galleyman aloud, but evidently speaking to himself.

"Why," replied Holgrave, imagining the exclamation addressed to him, "I suppose he has left the Essex men to try what can be done among the bondmen!"

"But what has *he* to do with the Essex men or the bondmen?" asked the galleyman.

"Why, do you not know that that is Jack Straw, the Essex captain?"

"He Jack Straw!" cried Wells, with such a look as if his eyes rested on a spectre. "Have I not heard John Ball say that he wished Wat Tyler were like Jack Straw?"

"Yes; father John thinks better of him than of any who leads: but to tell you the truth," added Holgrave, in a whisper, "though he can read and write, and is as father John says, a prudent man — I don't like him."

"Do you know him?" emphatically asked the galleyman.

"To be sure I do!"

"But I mean," impatiently resumed Wells, "did you ever see him before he was with those Essex men?"

"No."

"Then, Stephen Holgrave, a word in your ear: — *I* know him; and let that man hoist what colours he may, steer clear of him — you understand me!"

Holgrave had not time to reply, when Wells suddenly, in a gay careless tone, accosted a man who was approaching the spot where they stood. "Hah! Harvey! who thought of seeing you among the true commons?"

Harvey looked at the speaker an instant, and then, recognizing him as poor Beauchamp's successor in the jury, was about to joke him upon his long fast, when his eyes, gleaming upon Holgrave, he thought it the most prudent course to make no allusion to the matter, but directly to reply to Wells's salutation.

"Why my business in the country," said he, "fell off a little; and so I was trying to make out a living here, and Tom Merritt coming across me, it took little to pursuade me to hold with the commons."

,, In hopes of being well paid," thought the galleyman, though he said nothing; he merely smiled an answer, and then, drawing Harvey a little aside, whispered him —

"But what gale drove our worthy foreman here?"

"Oh! you know, I suppose, that he is a sworn brother among the leaders, though I didn't know it till this very evening, when it happened that I was sent to the Essex men to know when they thought of marching. You know Black Jack gets on badly without a drop, and, as he could hardly obtain enough among them to wet his lips, he took

the opportunity, as he said, of my coming to raise a good spirit among the bondmen — but in truth to ——" and he put an empty wine-cup, that he held in his hands, to his mouth.

The apartment was so densely filled, that the door had opened, while this conversation passed without attracting the least attention; but Wells, who bethought him that the minutes were flitting, found a passage for himself, and, approaching the table, placed a stool that he took from behind one who had relinquished it, in order that not a word that fell from Jack Straw should escape him, and, mounting upon it, shouted out at the top of his voice —

"With whom hold ye, friends?"

There was a sudden hush at this abrupt interrogatory, and Jack Straw was about to answer in no very gentle manner, when, fixing his penetrating eyes upon Wells, a significant glance informed the galleyman that he was recognized, and, suppressing the epithet he was about to use, Oakley merely replied —

"We hold, as all honest men ought — with King Richard and the true commons!"

"It is of little use holding with them," returned Wells, "if you stand talking there all night; — the time is now come for action, not speech — at two the commons of London meet on Tower-hill — that is my message." He then turned away, and was hurrying with Holgrave from the room, when Jack Straw, stepping round from his post of orator, intercepted him, and, seizing him by the arm, whispered in his ear —

"Are you leaders too? By the green wax! I

suppose I shall see the ghost of the ferret among the good commons next! But mind ye, galley-man — not a syllable that we ever met!" glancing his eyes at Holgrave.

"Not a word," replied Wells, breaking from the foreman's hold, and effecting a precipitate retreat.

At the appointed hour the commons of London mustered in strong force on Tower-hill; and, headed by Wells, passed on to London-bridge. Here they halted, and, upon a blazing brand being affixed to a long spear, and elevated in the air, a sudden shout from the thousands occupying the southern bank, was re-echoed by the Londoners, and caused, as might be expected, a strong sensation among the citizens, inducing a disposition rather to concede than to provoke. The elevation of a second torch was the signal that a parley had been demanded by the loyalists; and then the sudden silence was almost as startling as had been the previous tumult. The horn of the Lord Mayor's herald again sounded the parley: those who styled themselves the commons, demanded that the gates should be opened, and their brethren of Kent permitted to pass. There was some scruple as to the propriety of acceding to this demand, which, however, was soon got over by the unequivocal assurance that the commons *would* pass at any rate; and that, if further opposition was offered, their first act, upon entering the city, would be to tear down the houses and demolish the bridge. This argument was forcible; and, as there appeared no alternative, the mayor, first stipulating that the houses and stalls on the bridge should remain unharmed, and that free passage should be

granted to the citizens to return to their dwellings, passed, with the civic force, between the opening ranks of the dictating commonalty. Those of the latter, who had arrows rested meanwhile on their bows, and those who were armed with swords and spears on their cross-hilts and handles; — and thus, in the attitude of submission, and in the silence of peace, stood the confederates until the last citizen had gone by. Then the close and the rush, and the simultaneous shout, came upon the eye and ear like the gathering of mighty waters; and, ere five minutes elapsed from the departure of the mayor, the bridge groaned with the hurried tread of the insurgents, and Tyler planted midway the banner of St. George on the highest house-top.

Shouting for the prophet, Tyler and the galleyman led on the multitude to Tower-hill; but when here, it was to little purpose that the former and Holgrave went rapidly along the verge of the moat, from one extremity to the other, and to as little purpose did the smith's practised eye run over every bar and fastening that came within his ken—he could detect nothing in the massive walls but the strong work of a skilful artizan.

"The ditch is deep," said Holgrave; "but a part could easily be filled up; and if we had ladders, the wall is not high."

"Aye, or if you had a score or two of hempen ropes, with good grappling irons, it would be but boy's play to get aloft," said the galleyman.

Unfortunately, however, they were provided neither with ladders nor ropes; but even had they been so, it is doubtful whether they would have

been put in requisition — for now arose the question as to what part of the building they ought to attack, and where lay the prison of the prophet, admitting that he was a prisoner. A thousand suppositions and conjectures were afloat, but no one was sufficiently well acquainted with the building to give a decisive answer. Indeed, it appeared that scarcely a single individual among them had ever crossed the drawbridge.

An angry debate now ensued among the leaders. Some, confiding in their numerical force, and zealous for the liberation of the prophet, were for storming the fortress at any point, and for effecting their object more speedily, proposed razing to the foundation some of the neighbouring houses, and filling up the ditch with the materials. Others thought such an attack might rather militate against themselves than turn to any account in redress of grievances, and after all might fail to advantage the monk : these proposed that a parley should be demanded, and their resolutions submitted to the king, with a requisition for the prophet's release.

"Men of Kent!" shouted Tyler, indignant at this pacific proposal, "what, do you suppose King Richard and his council, who are cooped up yonder, will think of us while we stand talking and gaping here? Think ye they will take off the poll-tax, or free the bondman? or open the prison door of our holy prophet, while they see us waiting like so many beggars, for them to read what is written on the sheepskins? I hold, that leaving half our brave fellows here, to let them know that if we do not mount their walls, we have an eye

upon them, the rest should go on and see what is to be done in other parts of London. Who knows but we might get hold of that mortal fiend, John of Gaunt; if we once had him, by St. Nicholas! we might ask for what we liked. Stephen Holgrave, do you keep watch here, and let no one come or go: should there be any thing to be said, you know what to say—that is enough." And then, marshalling off a strong and picked body from among his followers, the smith hurried forward, accompanied by the galleyman and Kirkby, through the city, injuring neither person nor property, but only exacting from every one they encountered in their progress, a shout and a God-speed for the true commons.

The barred gates of the Fleet prison flew open before the assailants, and the wretched inmates felt their feverish temples once more cooled by the pure breath of liberty. At about a hundred paces from the Fleet, they passed a house, having the bush suspended in front, indicating its possessor to be a vintner; and the host himself, with singular fool-hardiness, stood looking out from the open casement of the first story.

"With whom hold ye, friend?" said Tyler, as he passed, imagining, from the dauntless manner of the man, that he was a friend.

"Not with such traitors and rebels as ye, with whomever else I may hold!" returned the man.

At the instant, a bow was drawn, an arrow whizzed, and the imprudent vintner fell back from the casement.

"Break in the door!" said Tyler, "and let us see if the cellars of this unmannerly knave have

any thing more to our liking than their master's speech."

There was no need to repeat the order — the door was smashed to splinters, and, in the rush to get at the cellars, several were thrown down, and trampled on. A large can, filled with wine, was handed to Tyler, and another to the galleyman, who, each quaffing a long draught, permitted the like indulgence to their followers; and then the word to march on was shouted by the chief. But now the smith perceived evidence of the folly he had been guilty of: the wine was too tempting to be left so soon — the vintner's house rang with execrations and tumult — and even among those who kept their station in the street, the dangerous liquid continued to circulate.

"This comes," said Tyler, enraged at such sudden disorder, "of letting folks taste of what they're not used to; but let them tipple on. By St. Nicholas! they may: I will wait for no man;" and snatching the banner of St. George from its half-stupified bearer, and waving it in the air, he applied a small bugle to his lips, and at the blast, all whose reason was not entirely lost in their thirst, followed the smith from the scene of inebriety.

Their next halt was at the beginning of the Strand, opposite the princely mansion of the bishop of Chester. The gates were forced in, and the garden encircling the building filled with the commons, who, hissing and shouting, bade John Fordham come forth. When it was discovered that the bishop was not within its walls, the house was presently glowing in one bright sheet of flame. It was told to Tyler, while this was going on, that a

body of the Essex men had marched on from Mile-end, and taking a northerly direction, had pillaged and destroyed many dwellings, and among others, that of the prior of Saint John of Jerusalem, at Highbury; while another division was rapidly advancing by the way of Holborn, to attack the palace of John of Gaunt at the Savoy.

"By St. Nicholas!" said Tyler, "they shan't have it all their own way there;" and the Kentish men made all haste to be first to commence the work of destruction; but ere they had left the burning house, the dark body of the division of the Essex men was seen pouring into the Strand by the wall of the Convent garden.

Tyler and the other leaders, followed by hundreds, now rushed on to the palace; — the massive gates yielded to their blows, and the assailants, pouring in through the arched passages, ran along gallery and window, and through seemingly countless apartments. Yet, even amidst their eagerness to capture Lancaster, they paused a moment, casting glances of astonishment and pleasure at the beautifully inlaid cabinets, rich tapestries, and embroidered cushions, which every where met their gaze. The galleyman, however, was perhaps the only one among all the gazers who knew the value of the things he looked upon; and he could not repress a feeling of regret, as he glanced at the damask hangings, and the gold cords and fringes, and remembered that all these would be speedily feeding the flames. As he was thus occupied, and thinking what a fortune these articles would be to a pedling merchant, he saw Jack Straw in the act of whispering in Harvey's ear (who, by some strange

sort of moral attraction, was standing by his side), and he noticed them linger until the group they had accompanied passed on to the inspection of other apartments. Oakley then opened a door in a recess in the corridor, which, when they entered, they closed hastily after them.

" Master Tyler," said Wells, springing up to the chief, " they are boarding a prize yonder;" and he pointed to the half-concealed door.

" Have they got John of Gaunt?" vociferated the smith; but as he turned his eyes from the spot to which his attention had been directed, to his informant, the galleyman could not be distinguished among the group — for, in truth, he was rather solicitous to avoid any kind of contact with his old associates.

" Confound the unmannerly carl," muttered Tyler, as he rushed forward with his men to seek an explanation in the room itself. The door, however, resisted all their efforts; and this only strengthening their hasty suspicions respecting Lancaster, the stout polished oak was presently split asunder by their axes, and they forced an entrance into a small light apartment, furnished in a style of eastern luxury. From the carved ceiling were hanging the broken links of a gold chain; and on the soft crimson cushions of an ebony couch, and on the floor, were scattered the miscellaneous contents of an exquisite ivory cabinet.

" He has escaped us!" shouted Tyler and the others, as, after casting a rapid glance around the empty apartment, they darted through an open door on the other side. This led into a luxurious dressing room, and this again into a sumptuous

dormitory. If there were any outlet from this room, it was concealed by the splendid hangings, and the pursuers, after assuring themselves that no human being was within, returned to the dressing-room. The door of egress from this apartment was secured on the outside, and so, without a moment's delay, they had recourse to their former expedient, and the door was instantly hewn to splinters. On creeping through the aperture, and passing through a short passage, they found themselves in the gallery that ran round the hall. Here, chafing with disappointment, the pursuers had only to hope that they might, by chance, take the right scent, and were rushing along the gallery, when Tyler, casting his eyes below, and observing the galleyman cross the hall, hallooed to him; and then springing along the gallery, and down the spiral stairs, seized Wells rather unceremoniously, and upbraided him with conniving at the escape of Lancaster.

"Avast there! Master Tyler," said Wells, shaking off the gripe of the smith; "I know no more of Lancaster than yourself: I told you this morning he was on the borders — and so, how, in the name of all the saints, could he be here? — but I tell ye, there are some here who would rather lay hand upon John of Gaunt's gold than upon John of Gaunt's body!"

"They have better not come across me," replied the smith, comprehending the galleyman's hint; but still persisting in his scepticism, he resumed his search. But even the smith was, at length, compelled to admit that, whether Lancaster had escaped or not, it did not appear likely

that he would be found; — and the order was given for firing the palace. At the same instant a leathern jack, covered all over with a thick quilting of blue satin, was held upon the point of a lance, and as many arrows shot at it as they would more willingly have aimed at the breast of its owner. The building was already smoking in fifty different places, and at some points the flames were already rising. Tyler, who had determined not to believe in Lancaster's absence, after lingering about the palace with the hope that the devouring element might force him from some hiding-place, accidentally found himself in the chapel close to the sanctuary, and just at the opportune moment to detect a sacrilegious hand removing a massive gold candlestick from the altar.

"Infidel! devil!" shouted Tyler, springing over the railing of the sanctuary, and raising his clenched fist: the candlestick fell from the grasp of the delinquent, and he reeled against the altar with the force of the blow. "What!" continued Tyler, aghast, "can it be Jack Straw?"

"Yes, it is," replied Oakley, fiercely, in some measure recovering from his confusion, and from the effects of the blow, "and, by the green wax! a strange way you have of claiming acquaintance — what did you think, Tyler, I was going to do with the candlestick? Will not the Commons have churches of their own, when they obtain their rights, and would it not be a triumph over Lancaster, to have these brave candlesticks gracing our altars."

Tyler had turned away while Black Jack was

speaking, but suddenly stopping, turned abruptly round, and looking full at him —

"I'll tell you, Jack Straw, said he, "were it not for my respect for father John, I would have every door of this chapel fastened up, and then the flames that are already crackling the painted windows yonder, would just give you time to say a pater-noster and an ave, before they cheated the gibbet of its due! but, as it is, let *him* who put you over the Essex men look to you, but, by my faith," he added, stamping his foot against the pavement, and speaking quicker, "if you do not instantly leave this place, all the monks that ever told a bead shall not save you!"

It was yet possible for Oakley to feel shame, and it was not entirely with rage, that his whole body at this moment trembled. He looked at the smith as he spoke, and half drew a dagger from his bosom, and, an indifferent spectator, regarding the two — Oakley still standing on the upper step of the altar, and Tyler, at a dozen paces down the centre aisle — would have thought that there could have existed but little odds between the physical power of the men; but Oakley, although he ground his teeth, and felt almost suffocated, had too much prudence to expose his gross enervated body to the muscular arm of the vigorous smith. Therefore, assuming an indignation of a very different character from his real feelings, he said, as he stepped from the altar into the nave of the chapel,

"I don't understand your language, Master Tyler — am not I a leader?—Does not the prophet know me, and trust me?"

"By St. Nicholas! the prophet does *not* know

you! Do you think he would have trusted you, if he had thought you would have skulked into a chapel to steal the very candlesticks from the holy altar!"

An execration passed between Oakley's teeth — he sprang upon Tyler, and had not the smith dexterously raised his left arm and arrested the blow, Black Jack's dagger would have been buried in his bosom.

"That for ye, coward," said Tyler, striking him with the flat side of his bared weapon. Oakley aimed another thrust which was again turned aside, and the smith, now flinging down his sword, seized upon his right hand and wrenched the dagger from its grasp. After a short struggle, Oakley fell heavily on the pavement with the blood streaming from his mouth and nostrils.

"Lie there, for a dog — to strike at a man with a dagger!" said Tyler, as he took up his sword, and muttering something about "if it was not for the sake of the prophet," strode hastily away. And there was little time for delay; the atmosphere of the place was becoming quite insupportable, and the flames were spreading with such rapidity, that the smith, half stupified and scorching, had enough to do to escape from the mischief he had kindled.

That afternoon, Richard was standing on a turret of the fortress, looking at the column of flame which still rose brightly from Lancaster palace, even above the heavy smoke and occasional sparklings which told elsewhere of the whereabout of the incendiaries.

"Our cousin will have to crave hospitality, when

he returns home," said Richard, addressing the Earl of Oxford, who stood beside him.

"The knaves have been merry on their march," replied Oxford. "Does your grace see the bonfires they have lit yonder?" and he pointed towards the north.

"By my faith, it is more than provoking to see the audacity of the kerns. Think you not," added Richard, after pausing a moment, "that if that monk was brought forth, and his head laid on a block, some terms might be made with the rebels. Do you see," continued the king, as they descended to the battlements, "they are bringing huge beams towards the drawbridge."

It indeed seemed evident that some bold measure was contemplated, and Richard's suggestion respecting the monk was about to be acted upon, with only a prudent hint from Sir Robert Hales not to provoke the Commons to desperation, when De Boteler's page approached his master.

The baron was standing apart from the other nobles, scanning, with a gloomy countenance, the dark undulating mass below. Once he could have sworn that Stephen Holgrave stood upon the verge of the ditch before him, but if it was he, he stood but an instant, and then was lost amidst the multitude. This circumstance gave a new turn to De Boteler's meditations; he thought too of the monk of Winchcombe Abbey — this John Ball, who was styled the prophet; and it seemed to be no less true than strange, that the germ of all this wide-spreading disorder had sprung from his own soil. So much, in fact, was he absorbed in these ideas, that he actually started when his page, who had been

for the space of a minute endeavouring to draw his attention by repeated obeisances, ventured to pronounce his name in rather a high key, as he presented to him an arrow which had been found sticking in the door-post of the building in which father John was confined. "And this was shot from the river?" asked De Boteler, as he received the arrow and unrolled a parchment wrapped round it.

"Yes, my lord."

"Tell Calverley to come hither directly."

The page withdrew, and De Boteler, after perusing the parchment, presented it to Richard. It ran thus: "A retainer of the Lord de Botelèr, will come, unarmed and alone, beneath the southern battlements, at ten o'clock. He is a leader of the commons, but, being touched with remorse, he will, if admitted before the king in council, disclose all the secrets of the rebels."

"Know you any retainer of yours who could have written this?"

"My steward, who approaches, can better answer the question, your highness," returned the baron.

The parchment being handed to Calverley, he instantly recognized the hand, and, in answer to De Boteler's question, replied —

"This is the hand-writing of a retainer called Oakley."

"Do you know the man?"

"Yes, my lord."

Calverley then retired, and those whom the matter concerned, withdrew to an apartment, and gave

their opinions according to the view in which the thing appeared to them.

That it was a stratagem to gain entrance to the Tower, was the opinion of several, but, after much discussion, it was decided that the man should be admitted, and that the monk should be exhibited merely to intimidate the rebels, until the result of this promised communication should be known.

About ten, a small boat was observed to approach the southern walls of the fortress. A man stepped from it and was permitted to ascend the terrace, and Calverley, who was standing there, challenged the stranger.

The steward clapped his hands, and immediately the bows of a hundred archers stationed around, weie unbent, and he addressed Oakley as follows:

"It was you who shot the arrow?"

"Yes."

"Are you a leader, Oakley?"

"I was a leader," returned Oakley, gloomily.

"It was well that I was here to recognize your writing."

"Where there is a will there is a way, steward, and I should have found means of getting revenge even if you had kept safe at Sudley."

"Is it for revenge, Oakley, or for gold?"

"I tell you Master Calverley, it is revenge," said Black Jack, stopping short, as they were crossing the court-yard, "It is revenge! When I joined the commons I swore I would not betray them, and I would not — betray them for gold did you say? — listen — I had gold — aye gold enough, to have kept me an honest man all the days of my life, after

this rising, and that — that blacksmith, who killed the baron's retainer—

"Turner! what of him?"

But Oakley went on without heeding the interruption. "What was it to the knave whether I or the flames had them — and to be cuffed and threatened! — but the gibbet shall not be cheated of *him*. Do you know they threw Harvey into the flames—I heard the shrieks of the wretch, but I could not help him, though I knew my treasure was burning with him! for I was crawling, all but suffocated, and seeking for an outlet towards the river. I heard the cry, but for an instant, and then nothing, through the long passage but the rush and the roar of the flames."

"Then the gold you speak of was lost?"

"Yes, by the green wax! it was. If I had only been wise enough to have kept the bag myself, poor Harvey might have been alive, and I should not have done what I am going to do this night. No; — I should only have cursed the smith and forsworn the Commons, and made the best of my way to where I could have turned the gold and the gems into hard coin. Is my lord De Boteler here?"

"Yes."

"Then, master Calverley, although, as I have said before, it is to revenge myself, you must tell the baron that the king must not expect to have my assistance in betraying the Commons without paying for it."

"My lord will not see you but in the presence of the council."

"Not see me! then, by the green wax! I may

be cheated; for one can hardly ask the king for money to his face."

"The baron has pledged himself that, if your intelligence and services are such as you hinted at, you may claim your own reward."

"May I? — then John Oakley will be no niggard," his countenance losing much of the gloomy ferocity it had been marked with. "But, steward," he added, as they walked through the building, "the smoke and the flame are even now in my throat; — you must give me wine, or I shall not be able to speak a word."

De Boteler was instantly acquainted with Oakley's arrival, and the council assembled, impressed with the importance of detaching so influential a leader from the Commons. Indeed, energy had given place to indecision, at a moment that required prompt measures. Tyler had, but an hour before, sent an intimation, that, if the prophet was not released in twenty-four hours, the city would be fired, and the Tower assaulted: and, even at the moment when the members of the council were entering the chamber, the air was rent with the shouts of the Commons on Tower-hill and Smithfield, as some skilful artizans among their body had nearly matured some machines for facilitating the attack. Symptoms of panic or indifference had been also manifested among those who guarded the Tower. The strange stories whispered of Ball, his prophecies, and his calm bearing while confined in his dungeon, with his oft repeated assertions of being liberated by the Commons, were calculated, in such an age, to fill their minds with the belief

that he was, in truth, a prophet, and one whom it would be impiety to meddle with.

After Richard, surrounded by the lords, had taken his seat at the table, Black Jack was introduced by De Boteler as the writer of the scroll.

"You are a leader of the rebels?" interrogated Sudbury.

"I am, your grace," replied Oakley.

"Which division of the kerns do you command?"

"The commons of Essex."

"What! all?" interrupted Richard.

"My liege, I am leader of fifty thousand men."

"Then what is the design of this rising?" again asked Sudbury.

"To free the bond — to acquire land at a low rent — to be at liberty to buy and sell in all cities and towns, without toll or interruption; — and lastly, to obtain a pardon for this insurrection."

"By my faith!" said Sir Robert Hales, "these are bold demands, which the sword alone must decide."

"Peace! Sir Robert, said Sudbury. — "What have you to suggest which may benefit the realm, sir leader?" he continued.

"Ere I say more," said Oakley, falling on his knees before Richard, "I crave a general pardon, not only for myself, as leader in this rising, but for all other trespasses by me committed."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Richard, "the knave is wisely valiant! He has an especial care of his own neck. Rise — thou art pardoned."

"But, my liege," continued Oakley, still kneeling, "there is one confined in this fortress for whom I would solicit freedom."

"To whom do you allude, knave?" asked Sudbury, with some surprise.

"To father John Ball."

"To father John Ball! to that son of satan — that vile author of all this confusion. Be content with saving your own head."

"Then, my lord archbishop," said Oakley, rising, "if a hair of that monk's head is touched, I will not answer for the result. Wat Tyler, my lords, is a man of desperate purpose. He has sworn before the multitude, that, if the prophet is not freed before the twenty-four hours, the heads of all these noble peers around me shall answer for it. — Nay more ——"

"Hold, kern," interrupted Richard fiercely; "we despise the threat."

"But, my liege," persisted Jack Straw, "let the council consider the danger of the delay. I have reason to know, that those you reckon upon to oppose an entrance here are not to be trusted: the prophet has worked wonders, even within the fortress."

"How know *you* that?" asked Richard, with surprise.

"My liege, there are disciples of John Ball in the Tower — aye, even among the royal household!"

"'Tis false!" returned Richard, angrily — "who are they? — confess! confess!"

"No, my liege — though I have renounced the confederates, I cannot betray them; but if the monk is freed, I will, at the risk of my head, quell the rising, without blood."

"How? — speak!" said Sudbury.

"My lord, you have heard the conditions, which have been drawn up by John Ball himself. I would humbly suggest, that charters of freedom should be granted under the royal hand and seal: if it so please you — they can be revoked at leisure. The Essex men will be content with these charters and a general pardon — but the prophet must be first set at liberty: he abhors bloodshed, will curb this Tyler, and thus this formidable array may be dispersed. I would further suggest, that your highness, attended by a slight retinue, and unarmed, should repair to-morrow to Mile-end, where I shall have assembled the leaders, and will sound them on these points. The charters may then be read, and, my lords, you are aware, that even the royal franchise cannot destroy your right over the bondmen, without an act of parliament."

While Oakley was speaking, all eyes were fixed upon him with something of astonishment at advice that would not come amiss from the sagest among them.

"Retire," said Sudbury; "we shall consider the matter."

"My lords," said the wily prelate, in a solemn tone, "this man has anticipated my counsel. It may not be safe to meddle with this Ball for the present. The charters may be made out, and, of course revoked hereafter; but I like not your grace perilling your person, alone and unguarded, among the kerns."

"My lord," said Richard, "we are resolved to meet these bold men, and hear what they have to say. Shall you attend us, my lord of Canterbury?"

"I would fain be excused, with your highness's leave. A dignitary of holy church should not degrade his calling by communing with the scum of the land!"

"Then, my lord bishop, let who will stay, we go. My lords, will you attend your king?"

"To death, my liege," said De Boteler and the rest.

"'Tis well — let this man be recalled."

"Tell the commons, that King Richard will see them to-morrow," said De Boteler.

"Then, my lord, the monk is to be freed?" asked Oakley.

"His life is spared till after the conference," said the treasurer; his freedom depends upon the disbanding of the Essex men."

Oakley was then led forth from the council by De Boteler, who pledged himself that the monk should not be harmed; and, after receiving, from Calverley, a part of the stipulated reward, he retired from the fortress by the way he had entered.

CHAPTER VII.

The Tower clock had just struck ten, and father John was reading a Latin manuscript by the light of a small lamp, when the door of his prison opened, and the glare of a large wax-light, preceding a lady, almost dazzled his eyes. The torch-bearer, placing the torch in a convenient position against the wall, retired, leaving the monk and the lady alone.

There was but one seat in the dungeon, so John Ball arose, and presenting his stool to his visitor, seated himself on the bundle of straw which composed his bed.

Isabella de Boteler placed the stool so that her own face might be in the shade, at the same time that the light played full upon that of the monk. They sat an instant silent; and as the baroness bent her eyes upon the father, she saw, in the deep marks on the forehead, and in the changed hue of his circling hair, that he had paid the price of strong excitement; but yet she almost marvelled if the placid countenance she now gazed upon

could belong to one who had dared and done so much. At length she spoke.

"You know me, father John?"

"Yes, lady."

"Know you why I have visited this cell?"

"It is not for me to speak of what is passing in the heart of another."

"Tell me, monk," asked Isabella, "did you see the multitude who filled the open space when you were led upon the battlements this afternoon?"

"I did, lady, and my heart rejoiced — even as a father at sight of his children!" a slight tinge passing over his cheek.

"You speak too boldly," said Isabella, with some impatience; "but if your eyes were gladdened with what they saw on Tower-hill to day, they will not be gladdened at the things that will meet their glance to-morrow!" She hesitated, and then went on rather hurriedly: "When you are led forth again, the rebellious commons will be dispersed, and the block will be standing ready for your own head!"

"Man is but dust, and a breath may blow him away. I was born, Lady de Boteler, but to die; and there is not a morning, since I have abided in this dungeon, but, as I have watched the first rays of light stream through yonder grating, I have thought, shall my eyes behold the departing day! and, as well as a sinner may do, I prepared for my end. But, lady, are the thousands but as one man? — and think you that the spirit which has gone forth ——"

"I tell you, father John, interrupted Isabella,

"that even at this moment a leader of the rebels is before the council — and ere to-morrow's sun shall set, the turbulent villeins will be either hanged or driven back — and *you* will be beheaded!"

"Is the betrayer a captive?" asked the monk; and he fixed an anxious searching glance on the baroness.

"No, the man came voluntarily ——"

Isabella paused. The monk, however, did not reply; but she inferred, from a sort of quivering of the upper lip, that her information affected him more deeply than he chose to tell. She passed one hand across her forehead, and then, clasping them both, and resting them upon her knees, looked earnestly at John Ball, and said, impressively —

"The rebels are betrayed, and you are condemned; but, if you will hearken to my request, this hour shall free you from prison: — Will you, will you tell me of my lost child?"

"Lady," said the monk in a stern voice, "think you so meanly of John Ball that he would do for a bribe what he would not do for justice sake? The time was when ye might have known, but ye took not counsel —— "

"Then he lives!" said Isabella, in a suppressed shriek; and she bent her head on her bosom, and covered her face with her hands.

For a minute she sat thus, and then slowly removing her hands, and raising up her pale and tearful face, said tremulously, and in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible, "My child then does live?"

"Baroness de Boteler, I said not that your child lives."

"Oh, father John, torture me not so," said she, with hysterical eagerness. "Oh, tell me not that I have a living son, and then bid me look upon the grave. Oh, lead me to my child, or even give assurance that he lives, and you shall be freed; and if he whom I suspect did the deed, he shall be pardoned and enriched."

"The Baroness of Sudley," replied father John, "does not know the poor Cistercian monk. Were the bolts withdrawn, and that door left swinging upon its hinges, I would not leave my prison until the voice of the people bade me come forth. And know ye not, lady, that with what measure ye mete to others, the same shall be meted to you again. Did ye deal out mercy to Edith Holgrave? Did ye deal mercifully by Stephen, when ye gave him bondage as a reward for true faith — and then stripes and a prison? And, as for me, — can ye expect that the bondman's son is to set a pattern of mercy and forgiveness to the noble and the free?"

"I was right, then," said the baroness, in a more composed tone — "it was Stephen Holgrave who did the deed; but father, if you spurn my offers, at least answer me yes or no to one question — Am I the mother of a living son?"

It was in vain, however, that Isabella promised, implored, and even threatened; John Ball would not vouchsafe another reply, and the baroness, at length, wearied and indignant, arose, turned abruptly from the monk, and summoning her attendants, hastened forth to her own apartment, and

there, throwing herself in a chair, wept and sobbed until her heart was in a measure relieved.

That night was a period of strong excitement within and without the Tower. Without, the moonlight displayed an immense mass of dark bodies stretched on the ground, and slumbering in the open air; while others, of more active minds, moved to and fro, like evil spirits in the night. Beyond, in the adjacent streets, occasionally rose the drunken shouts of rioters, or the shrieks of some unhappy foreigner, who was slaughtered by the ignorant and ferocious multitude for the crime of being unable to speak English. Within the Tower there was as little of repose; there were the fears of many noble hearts, lest the renegade leader might not be as influential as he vaunted, concealed beneath the semblance of contemptuous pride or affected defiance; — then there were the sanguine hopes of the youthful Richard; — the maternal fears of his mother; — the anxious feelings of the baroness; — the troubled thoughts and misgivings of John Ball; — and the strange whisperings among the men at arms and archers, who all " did quail in stomach," we may suppose, at the novel combination of a prophet in prison, and an armed populace besieging the fortress.

The next morning Richard, without breastplate or helmet, but simply attired in a saffron-coloured tunic and an azure mantle lined with ermine (on which opened pea-shells were wrought in their natural green, but with the peas represented by large pearls), a cap of azure velvet, edged also with ermine, and with no other weapon but a small dagger in the girdle of his tunic, prepared himself to meet

his rebellious subjects. The idea of letting down the drawbridge, and passing by it from the Tower, was too imprudent a thing to be thought of, and Richard, therefore, attended by De Boteler, Oxford, Warwick, Sir Aubrey de Vere, and a few others, were just about taking water, in order to pass a little way down the river, and then proceed to Mile-end on horseback, when the Princess Joan, attended by the Lady Warwick, joined the party, and intimated her intention of accompanying her son.

It was to little purpose that Richard expostulated; the fair Joan was resolved to share in whatever perils might befal her son. As they approached Mile-end, the princess started at the deafening clamour which arose from the multitude; some shouting for Richard as they saw him advance, and others vociferating as loudly that all should hold their peace until they knew what the king would grant. When the tumult had in some degree subsided, Sir Aubrey de Vere and Sir Robert Knowles rode forward in advance of the king, and approaching Jack Straw, who was also on horseback:—

"Sir leader," said De Vere, "we have come at the king's command to make known to these assembled Commons his grace's pleasure. Are ye willing to listen to the royal clemency?"

Leicester was not among the leaders, for, disgusted with Oakley's tardiness, he had about an hour before passed the city gates with a large body, to join Tyler. Jack Straw, therefore, had not him to contend with, and a flattering plausible speech in a few minutes procured attention to the following charter:—

"Richard, king of England and of France, doth greatly thank his good Commons, because they so greatly desire to see and hold him for their king; and doth pardon them all manner of trespasses, misprisions, and felonies done before this time, and willeth and commandeth, from henceforth, that every one hasten to his own dwelling, and set down all his grievances in writing, and send it unto him, and he will, by advice of his lawful lords and good council, provide such remedy as shall be profitable to him, to them, and to the whole realm."

"Ye may tell his grace," cried Rugge, "that I for one will never return to my dwelling until a charter is granted to make all cities free to buy and sell in."

"And shall we go back to our homes to be bondmen again?" burst in a wild cry from thousands.

At this moment a messenger rode up to Oakley, and, putting a letter into his hands, instantly retired.

"A message from the prophet!" cried Black Jack, as he glanced over the writing, and then read aloud, "John Ball greeteth Jack Straw, John Leicester, Ralph Rugge, and the other leaders, and also all the true commons assembled at Mile-end, and commandeth them that they listen to the voice of their anointed king, and hasten back to their own homes; and John Ball, who is now freed, will obtain from the royal hand, the charter of freedom, for the bond, and the redress of all the grievances that weigh down the free."

There was much murmuring and discontent at the tenor of this epistle; and but little disposition manifested to obey the mandate: but the example

of their principal leader, Jack Straw, who instantly, as in obedience to the prophet's command, divested himself of his sword, and presented it to Sir Aubrey de Vere, intimating his submission to the king, occasioned a sort of general panic, or rather, a distrust of their own powers. This, added to the specious and equivocal promises of Richard, who now approached; and the persuasive eloquence of Oakley, operated so far on the credulous multitude, that the king, amidst a universal shout of "Long live the king of the Commons," turned his horse's head towards London, rejoicing in his heart that so far the rebels were dispersed.

But in this instance his exultation was of short duration, for one, who had leaped from the battlements of the Tower unheeded, and had swam along the river unharmed, approached Sir Robert Knowles, who was riding something in advance of the party, and with his saturated apparel bearing testimony to his assertions, announced the stunning intelligence that the Tower was at that moment in the possession of the commons. This brave defender of the fortress was Calverley.

There was a sudden halt at this intelligence, and many an exclamation at the presumption of the insolent commons. However, after some consultation, it was deemed most prudent to come as little as possible in collision with the rebels, but, under countenance of the mayor, to pass through the city, and then, as the most probable security, claim the hospitality of the worthy abbot of Westminster.

We shall leave King Richard with the fair Joan of Kent and the nobles, to pursue their journey to

Westminster, while we give some idea of the means by which the commons, so soon after the departure of the king, became masters of the tower. The galleyman had been a resident in London for some years; and it will of course be inferred, that during this time he must have formed many acquaintances, which circumstance, indeed, had been of much avail in gaining admittance into the city, and now turned to as good account in effecting an entrance into the Tower.

It was about midnight that Wells, who had been thinking a great deal of the probability of gaining access to the fortress, went to the smith's quarters, and proposed to attempt an entrance. Tyler commended his devotion; and the galleyman, provided with a rope, to which an iron hook was affixed, and a flask or two of wine, dropped unobserved into the water. He swam on as softly as possible beneath the wall, and in the shadow cast by the moonlight. There was one part where he observed that an angle of the building cast a broad shade on the parapet; and here, without a moment's hesitation, he stopped, and throwing up the rope, the hook caught. Though encumbered by his wet apparel, he climbed up with the agility of a boy; but the instant his figure appeared above the wall, two men with drawn swords sprung forward.

"Hold there! I have brought ye a drop of wine."

At the first sound of his voice the weapons were lowered. "It was well that ye spoke, master vintner," said the men, taking each a flask of wine and draining its contents.

It so happened, that these men had a strong

sympathy for the commons, and besides this, they had been much wrought upon by the stories, whether true or false, circulated through the Tower respecting Ball; and it did not require much persuasion to gain them over in assisting Wells's project. A female domestic belonging to the lieutenant, a sweetheart of one of those men, secreted Wells in an apartment in her master's house, and contrived to purloin the keys of the gates after Richard's departure. The galleyman, aided by a few daring disciples of the prophet, with whom he found means to communicate through the same female instrumentality, surprised the few who guarded the gate, and drawbridge; and the blast of a horn was the signal for the smith to advance. So suddenly was this feat accomplished, that the men at arms, who were scattered up and down the fortress, had not time to seize their weapons or oppose the thousands who, headed by Tyler and Holgrave, rushed forward, and entered the Tower. With exulting shouts the conquerors took possession of the building. Some made strict search for the members of the council; others, with blows and taunts, employed themselves in divesting the panic-struck soldiers of their arms; and others, the more numerous of the intruders, were intent only on forcing the wine-cellars, regardless of the threats and buffets of their leaders. But above all this wild clamour, arose the voice of Tyler, who strode rapidly on, like some demon of power, striking and reviling friend or foe who was unable to point out where the prophet was confined.

At length one of the keepers was seized, who conducted Tyler and Holgrave to his cell.

"Father John, you are free — the Tower is ours!" exclaimed Holgrave, flinging wide the massive door.

"And I am freed? and by the bond!" exclaimed the monk.

"Aye, father John, you are free," said Tyler. "We have found you at last; but, by St. Nicholas! we have had a long search. Hah!" as he glanced on the monk, "have the knaves chained you. Bear him forth, men of Kent — Wat Tyler himself will strike off those irons."

The monk was then conducted to the outer door of the prison. It would be in vain to paint the frantic joy of those without. Deafening shouts of "The prophet is free!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then came the rush to obtain a prayer or benediction.

"Back, men of Kent — back," vociferated Tyler; — and then arose the long wild shout as Tyler freed the monk from the last link of his bonds.

Just then a movement among the people was observed, and a man, hastily forcing his way through the yielding ranks, announced to the astonished smith, and yet more astonished monk, that Oakley had, by command of the prophet, made terms with the king, and that even now the Essex men had broke up their camp, and were marching homewards.

"And is this thy counsel, father John?" said Tyler, reproachfully: "but, by St. Nicholas! this robber of the high altar shall not depart scatheless. Kentish men! — my horse, my horse!" and he stamped his armed heels upon the pavement.

"Wat Tyler," returned the monk, sternly, "this is *not* my counsel — this, then, is the traitor! — but perhaps he has obtained the charters!"

"The charters, father John," responded Tyler, with a sneer: "aye, by St. Nicholas! he has got *his* charters in good broad pieces, I'll warrant! — My horse, Kentish men, I say!"

"Confound the whole rising, if he escapes me! Stephen Holgrave! as the father does n't like me to go, tell Leicester to take a chosen body of the Kentish men; and, mark ye, he must catch that fiend, and bring him to the Tower, dead or alive!"

"Stephen Holgrave," said the monk, "let not one hair of his head be meddled with! And now, Wat Tyler, I enjoin thee to clear the fortress of those who have forgotten their duty—but slay not. I now go to the chapel, where I shall remain a short time in prayer." The monk then waved his hand, and drew his cowl closely over his brow, to hide from his gaze the evidences of debauchery he encountered at every step in his way to the chapel. The gutters and kennels ran with wine, and some, for want of vessels, were lying prostrate, lapping up the flowing beverage — some, entirely overpowered, were stretched across the doorways, and in the court-yards, serving as seats to others, who were, with wild oaths, passing round the goblet.

"And this is the first fruits of liberty," muttered the monk — "but no good can be had unalloyed with evil."

The chapel, during all the tumult, was unnoticed, probably less through respect for the place, than from neglect; and thither those who had most to fear from the people had hastened, expecting safety

from the sacredness of the spot. Among the rest, or rather leading the way, went Sudbury, who was shortly afterwards joined by the constable and treasurer, on perceiving the commons in possession of the Tower.

In order to impress the place with a still greater degree of awe, Sudbury, with his attendant priests, had robed themselves, and commenced vespers.

Father John entered the chapel, and prostrating himself thrice at the door, arose, and silently advanced to the foot of the altar. Here he recognised the archbishop, and, checking his emotions, knelt in prayer, unnoticed till the service had concluded. In the midst of the sacred song, terror was depicted, more strongly than piety, in the faces of all the worshippers, save Sudbury; he seemed calm, except, indeed, when a shout from without caused an indignant frown to darken his brow.

The monk was at length perceived, for the treasurer, on raising his eyes, met the glance of father John. "My lord bishop," said he, "yonder stands the monk, John Ball!"

"And why not, my lord treasurer?" said father John, in a clear, full voice, his face, before so pale, glowing, and his frame trembling so much that he grasped a pillar for support; "this temple is open to all—the just as well as the unjust."

"Darest thou, rash man, to defile the holy place?—why art thou not in thy prison?" said Sudbury, whose glance fell proudly and scornfully on the monk.

"Simon Sudbury," answered Ball, with a look of equal defiance, and still deeper scorn—"my

dungeon doors obeyed the spirit of the free; and God alone can judge who is defiled, or who is pure——"

"Away, degraded priest!" answered Sudbury, fiercely, and he raised his arm, and pointed towards the door.

"Simon Sudbury," retorted the monk, "if, as thou sayest, I am degraded, to thee no authority is due—if I am still a chosen one of the Lord, methinks I am free to enter and worship in his temple: but," he continued, elevating his tones to their fullest compass, "whether I am a priest or no priest, yet *here* I am powerful, and, proud prelate, *I*, in my turn, command *thee* hence!"

"And is this the way, misguided zealot?" cried Sudbury—"is this the way that *you* preach *peace?* What hast thou done with the royal Richard?"

"The royal Richard," returned father John, exultingly, "is but king of the *commons;* but the royal Richard is well served," he added, sarcastically, "by Simon Sudbury and the nobles, who leave their prince, in his peril, to hide them in holes and sanctuaries!"

The treasurer turned pale, and hung his head.

"Aye, Sir Treasurer, thou hast reason to sink thy head! Thy odious poll-tax has mingled vengeance—nay, blood—with the cry of the bond."

"It is thou, foul spirit!" cried Sudbury, descending a step from the altar—"it is thou who hast stimulated the thirst for blood, and hast brought the royal prerogative and holy church into contempt—away! ere, with my own hands, I drive thee hence!"

"And away, ill-starred prelate!—away (as I

prophesy) to thy doom!" returned the monk, advancing a step towards Sudbury; "aye—aye—away! and——"

The monk did not finish the sentence, for the door of the chapel was for a moment darkened with the shadows of two men, who were just entering; and father John, wrapping his cloak around him, walked rapidly towards them, and, with a single adjuration of "Friend Tyler, spare!" issued forth from the chapel.

Tyler, in his haste to seize the archbishop, stumbled over a lance which one of those who had fled with the prelate had dropped.

"Confound the hand that dropped thee!" muttered the smith, as he sprang on his feet. "John Kirkby, is not that Sudbury yonder? It is he, by St. Nicholas! Seize that babbling old man!—he with the mitre!" They had now arrived at the altar.

"Not one step further, kern!" cried the treasurer, seizing his sword, and placing himself in front of Sudbury.

A shriek from the women who had clustered around the treasurer, made matters worse; for, attracted by the noise, the chapel was instantly filled with armed men.

"Sir Treasurer, think you to scare him who leads the Kentish men? Kirkby, drag the antichrist from the altar!"

Kirkby advanced a few paces, but a glance from Sudbury seemed to unnerve him, and he stood for a moment irresolute.

"There, chicken-hearted carle!" cried the smith, felling Kirkby to the ground with his mailed hand

—"there, dog!—Wat Tyler must be obeyed! And now, Simon Sudbury, take off that blessed mitre, which ill befits thee, and come forth; for, by my faith and the blessed St. Nicholas! in one hour hence, thy head shall be stuck on London bridge, wrapped up in the hood of thy own mantle!" And with this, Tyler placed his foot on the first step of the altar.

Another shriek from the terrified females but seemed to augment his fury; and the treasurer, after a few vain parries, fell stunned and bleeding by a powerful blow of the smith's axe.

"Lie there, dog!—there goes one of the accursed council!" and, springing up the step with a giant grasp, he seized the mitred chancellor by the neck, and dragged him forth into the centre of the church.

"Hold, impious man!" said the undaunted prelate; "the noblest and gentlest heart in England lies bleeding and gasping on the high altar in defence of the Lord's anointed; but even the blood of the anointed shall stain the sanctuary ere *He* quail before man in his master's temple!"

"By St. Nicholas! then you shall be cheated of dying here," said Tyler; and, snatching the mitre from the grey locks it covered, he threw it to Holgrave. "There, Stephen, that shall soon sit upon a worthier head: and now, sir priest, or sir prelate, be quick with an ave—for the block is ready and the axe sharp. And you, Kirkby, (who sullenly stood by), mind and lift up that knave yonder," pointing to the treasurer; "for, by St. Nicholas! he, too, shall die!" and the trea-

surer, faint and almost lifeless, was, with Sudbury, borne away to Tower-hill.

John Ball, in the meantime, had passed on from the chapel, heedless of the greetings that met him at every step, and of the riot and confusion that would, at another time, have called forth his rebuke. At length, as he passed the royal apartments, he heard sounds that seemed to recal him to himself — they were the shrieks of woman! Throwing back his cowl, and casting an indignant glance at Kirkby, who had just emerged from the building, he said —

"What dost thou here, John Kirkby, and why these screams?"

Kirkby muttered something of the council.

"And darest thou, John Kirkby, a leader of the people — darest thou be the foremost to set at nought my commands? I repent me of my endeavours to right the oppressed, for, alas! they have been like stray sheep without the care of the shepherd! — and now, that the shepherd has sought and is among them, they heed not his voice."

But the shrieks were again repeated, and father John commanding Kirkby to follow, passed rapidly through the apartments, where every thing presented the trace of the spoiler. In many of them were stretched, or rather huddled together, peasants in the last stage. of inebriety, some on the beds, and others on the carpets; and the shattered garniture of this abode of Richard and his fair mother, served but to mark its recent costliness and splendour.

The monk groaned deeply as he observed four

or five men hewing with axes at a door which had resisted their first efforts to burst open; while two others were struggling with a man who seemed to be disputing their entrance; and a few paces from these lay, on a richly-worked counterpane, an infant, whose shrill cries mingled with the strife.

The flashing eye and indignant rebuke of the monk, on beholding this scene, unnerved the fear-stricken peasants.

"It is the prophet himself!" burst from the lips of the men, dropping their weapons and looking abashed.

"Aye, it is he whom you say is the prophet," cried father John, "and accurst, say I, be the house-breakers!" his eye fell on Ralph Rugge. "What, another of the chosen!" he added, with a withering glance. "All, all are unworthy — my heart is sick!" and he turned away and covered his face with his hands.

"Father John, you have come in good time," said the galleyman, who now approached the monk, and who was he that had been contesting with the two men; "for, good father, if my ears serve me rightly, within that berth is the Lady de Boteler!"

The monk started.

"And where is her lord?"

"I know not, unless he be with the king at Mile-end."

"Lady de Boteler," cried the monk, "if thou art within come forth!" and Isabella, at his voice, at once threw open the door

"Lady," said Ball, who, in a low voice, had exchanged a few words with Wells, "here thou

art no longer safe. Conduct this lady, my friend, to the abbey of Westminster," addressing Wells, "and encounter not those who might, unchecked by me, commit further outrage. Take a boat from the water-side — that way is yet open. Farewell, lady, I must hence; — for even Simon Sudbury, who made John Ball what he is now, may be in peril, and it is for the Lord alone to smite. — *I* seek not the brand to right me!"

The idea of Sudbury's danger had been confirmed by the behaviour of those whom his presence had arrested in guilt; and the monk, whose sympathies were thus awakened, hastened away, and gained the court-yard. Here his ears were assailed by a loud shout, which was repeated thrice, and which, he conjectured, proceeded from Tower-hill.

The monk hurried to the northern battlements, and stood, for an instant, gazing intently on the confusion which filled the vast area before him. At one point, and towards the centre, he observed a circle formed of some mounted commons, and he perceived a man in the midst in a kneeling posture. His voice now arose deep and startling as he exclaimed, "Wat Tyler, I adjure thee, touch not the prelate — touch not the Lord's anointed! Forbear! forbear!" and then, with an agility which, since his boyhood, he had not probably before exerted, he descended the platform, hurried through the fortress, crossed the moat, and then striding rapidly through the people, who made way as he approached, stood in the centre of that circle towards which his fears had impelled him.

A glance informed father John that vengeance

was swifter in the race than mercy, and his eye now fiercely sought for the guilty author of the drama. *He* stood a few paces to the right, leaning on the instrument of crime, and his eyes rivetted on the prophet. Upon his dark countenance was marked triumph and agitation, for he feared the storm which he expected was now to burst upon him. But whether it was the spectacle which the monk's first gaze encountered, or that indignation, too deep for utterance, overpowered his energies, cannot be said; but, after regarding Tyler with a look which seemed to combine every thing of horror and disgust, father John turned away, and was quickly lost in the multitude.

Those who witnessed this brief interview saw enough to indicate, in that glance cast on their leader, the monk's displeasure at the deed; and Tyler himself well understood the silent rebuke, for, turning to Kirkby, he said, in a bitter, though subdued tone,—

"John Kirkby, the father is angry, and this is all one gets for one's pains. Now that the mitre waits for his head, he will not put it on; — and did not that traitor Jack Straw often say the father wished for Sudbury's place; and though I hate bishops, I would not mind seeing *him* one, But, by St. Nicholas! he added fiercely, no more bishops for Wat Tyler — and —— "

The smith was here interrupted by a messenger from Richard, with a proclamation for the Commons to meet him the next morning in Smithfield, when they should have every thing they required.

"Ye may tell King Richard that the Commons

will meet him; but mind ye, and tell him to have no lords, nor men of law, nor any of that brood of bishops with him, if he wishes them to wear their heads; — mind ye that, sir pursuivant."

Tyler then retired, but first strictly enjoining, on pain of death, that the bodies of the archbishop and treasurer should not be removed nor interred.

When night came, and father John did not return, the feeling became general that, disgusted with the spectacle of the morning, he had abandoned the cause; and it became apparent, even to Tyler himself, that some decisive step must at once be taken, before those whom the monk's eloquence had aroused and united, and his promises inspired with a confidence of success, should, deprived of his guidance, return home in despair.

The smith was as great an enthusiast for the freedom of the bond as the monk himself; but his mode of obtaining it did not coincide with the peaceful bent of the father. Tyler's plan was bold and sanguinary, — the monk's, intimidation without violence; and energetic and accustomed as was the smith to act on his own impulses, yet, even in his fiercest moods, he willingly yielded obedience to the monk's suggestions. Indeed, he had long been accustomed to pay that deference which father John's mildness had, as it were, extorted; and the circumstance of their first connection, from the liberation of Ball from the dungeon of Sudley to the present period, had so increased his affection and veneration, that now, deprived of this pillar of support, he felt a loneliness and dejection which nothing around could dispel.

The morning was just breaking; and the moon

shone full and bright on the surrounding buildings, on the trees, on the tents that marked the lodgement of the leaders, and on the groups that lay tentless on the ground, buried in profound sleep. All within the boundary of the rude encampment were reposing in the confidence of power, without guard or centinel, save one, whose eye-lids closed not. Alone, in the corner of a tent, which stood in the centre of the encampment, sat Tyler, whom the moonbeams revealed, as they streamed through a rent in the canvass. His right hand clenched, and his elbow resting against the side of the tent, supported his head; and in his left he held a small gold crucifix, on which he was gazing, not with a countenance on which pity might be traced, but rather a look in which sorrow and despair seemed blended.

"Aye, it was *his* gift," said he. "However bad, father John, you may think Wat Turner, he cares for this holy relic more than the life his mother gave him. And was it not because he thought to place you above them all that Sudbury lies on Tower-hill? And did he not take off that mitre with his own hands?—and did not his heart beat joyfully when he saw you come, that he might put it on your head? And now you leave him with the work half done. And the poor commons, too, must go back again to be kicked and cuffed, and to bear the load heavier than before. Aye, father John—and did he not snatch you from the stripes and the bolt?—and were not his hands red with blood that blessed night?—and was he not forced to fly like a felon, and take this accursed name of Tyler?" Here his agitation increased, and his articulation became indistinct and husky; he started

up, thrust the crucifix into his bosom, and paced the tent for a few minutes in silence; then looked upon the sleeping mass, and resumed, as he re-entered the tent —

"Aye, ye may soon sleep your last sleep. They will have at ye in the morning; for the proud barons are gathering their might; but, by St. Nicholas! I may do something yet. Yes, there will be more blood — I see it; — I must have an order to behead the lords; and then, if Richard will be king of the commons, and no more lords or bondage, father John himself could not wish for more."

He, at length, became somewhat composed, and threw himself upon the floor, to get a few hours' rest.

At an early hour, he prepared to redeem his pledge of meeting the king; and the Commons, as they arrived, commenced forming in order of battle along the west side of Smithfield. When marshalled, they presented the appearance of a wedge, broad behind and gradually diminishing to the front; the banner of St. George was in the centre of the line, supported by the men at arms; while on either side were disposed the slingers and archers.

In this order, they awaited the king; and, in the interim, Tyler employed himself in riding up and down the ranks, exhorting the people to be firm, and to take care that they should not be cheated out of their rights by king or priest. Indeed, his whole demeanour supported the night's resolve, and vindicated a determination of purpose which imparted itself to the thousands who cheered him at every step in his progress.

We must premise, before describing the coming

interview, that the Tower was again occupied by Richard. A sudden attack during the night surprised those left in possession; and here the assiduity of the lords had collected a strong force, by means of the communication from the river; and they determined on giving battle to the commons, should they refuse to return home on obtaining the charters. A large body of the citizens had, by previous concert, thrown themselves unobserved into the priory of Bartholomew, in order to operate, under William Walworth, with those in the Tower.

Precisely at ten o'clock, Richard, without pomp or circumstance, issued from the Tower, attended only by De Boteler, Warwick, and a few others, Sir John Newton bearing the sword of state. He was apparelled in the same manner as when he appeared at Mile-end, when he went forth to meet the Essex men, and with that unsuspecting confidence that marked his early years, entered Smithfield with as much gaiety as if he were going to a banquet. Sir Robert Knowles and his men at arms had orders to follow at some distance, but on no account to show themselves until there might be occasion. After surveying the formidable array, which stretched far away into the fields, and listening to De Boteler's remarks on their clever arrangement, either for attack or defence,—

"By my faith! my lord," said Richard eagerly, "these knaves will not be trifled with; but lo! who have we here?" as he perceived a single horseman gallop forward from the centre.

"My liege," said Newton, as the horseman neared the royal train, "that man is Wat Tyler."

"And if my eyes do not mislead me," said De

Boteler, looking searchingly on Tyler, "I know the graceless kerne."

Newton then pushed forward to open the conference, and said, as he joined the smith —

"My lord, the king, wishes to hear you on the alleged grievances."

"And who are you, knave, that dare ride in presence of Wat Tyler?"

"I am, Sir John Newton, the king's sword-bearer," returned Newton, proudly.

"Then, by St. Nicholas! none shall ride here but Richard and myself. Come down, braggart," and he seized the bridle of Newton's horse.

Richard now rode up, perceiving the peril of his attendant.

"And what would ye have, Wat Tyler?" asked Richard, in a conciliatory tone.

"Sir King, I would first have this knave well whipped for riding in my presence."

"But what would ye have put in your own charter, Wat?" again asked Richard, endeavouring to draw the smith's attention from Newton.

Tyler, however, was more intent on unhorsing the sword-bearer, than listening to the king, for he now grasped Newton by the shoulder, and endeavoured to drag him from his horse.

During this altercation, a small body of archers had advanced from the lines to within bow-shot of the disputants.

Richard observed the movement, and beckoned to Sir John to dismount, who, choking with mortification, surrendered the animal to a man whom Tyler had beckoned to approach.

"And that dagger too, surly knave," said the

smith. "How dare ye come here armed. Go to, thou art a knave!"

Richard could contain himself no longer. "Thou liest! sir leader," said he, reining back his charger, whose bridle had come in contact with the head of the smith's horse.

"The dagger, knave," muttered Tyler, still intent on humbling the proud sword-bearer, and raising his axe in a menacing attitude.

The dagger, like the horse, was then relinquished, and Tyler, with a glance of triumph, turned to Richard, and continued —

"King Richard, I'll now tell you what the commons want: first, I want a commission to behead all the lords, and those who began the poll-tax — I would have no more lords nor bishops, nor lawyers, nor bondage; and I would have you king of the commons — and now sir king, be quick with the charter, for, by St. Nicholas! I shall not eat or drink till every mother's son of those yonder, can go and come, when and where they will; aye, and be as proud as the proudest of ye."

"These are bold demands, Wat Tyler," returned Richard, his cheek glowing with indignation, "and more, by my faith, than we shall listen to."

Tyler, during the colloquy, had seized his axe, and though it was not raised above his saddle-bow, yet the convulsive motion of the hand as it grasped the weapon, might seem to indicate danger to the young king. Richard was now surrounded by his retinue, among whom was William Walworth, the Lord Mayor, who had crossed over from the priory on perceiving his peril.

"Sir leader," cried the mayor, boiling with rage,

and approaching Tyler, "ride not so close to his grace, it ill becomes such as you to ride or speak so in the king's presence."

"Ha! and do ye say so?" returned Tyler, elevating his arm, "take ye that for your insolence:" but the blow, which would have deprived the worthy citizens of their sturdy chief, was arrested, ere it descended, by Warwick, who seized the uplifted weapon from behind, and the next moment the smith received a stunning blow from William Walworth's mace; then, as the reins dropped from his hands, a thrust from De Boteler's sword, ended the cares of one who, doubtless, had he lived at a later period, might, in the cause for which he bled, have been a Tell or a Hofer.

A thousand spears, and as many shafts, prepared to avenge his fall, and an instant more of indecision, and Richard would have been spared the humiliation of after years; but a bold inspiration at this critical moment, hurried him fearlessly forward into the midst of the commons.

"What, my lieges!" he exclaimed, with a smile of confidence, "are ye angry that your leader is slain? Richard of England shall supply his place — follow me to the field and ye shall have what ye desire!"

And, incredible as it may seem, the lances were lowered, the bows relaxed, and those who so lately had vowed to live or die with Tyler, followed the king to St. George's fields, rending the air with cries of "Long live King Richard!"

The men-at-arms, headed by Sir Robert Knowles, and the citizens, under Walworth, hurried after the commons, and when the charter had been granted,

and the people were dispersing, suddenly, and treacherously, fell upon them.

Unprepared for such an attack, and now no longer formidable, the insurgents, panic-struck, fled on all sides; and, after a brief struggle, many of the leaders were cut down or secured. Numbers of the people perished, and Richard once more entered the Tower in triumph.

It is almost useless to add, that the charters were soon after revoked, and thus failed the first struggle of the British helots.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the commons, trusting to a deceitful promise, had lost that unity which could alone render them formidable, it was no matter of difficulty to secure Holgrave, as he rushed forward to revenge Tyler's death. Besides his being a leader, a reward from the baron was offered for his capture; and it was to little purpose that he fought and struggled against a body which attacked him on every side; he was overpowered, and thrown into a cell in St. Bartholomew's priory, from which, when the tumult had ceased, he was removed, and, at the baron's request, delivered over to him for punishment.

This unexpected consummation wrought upon Holgrave so much, that, with the sullen determination which had marked his character on previous occasions, he resolved not to answer any questions whatever. We should have premised, that the galleyman had given Holgrave a solemn promise, that if any ill befel him, Margaret should be cared for like his own wife. This was a solace to him, as he thought over his mother's death, and his own

evil destiny. But there was another solace, that, strange as it may appear to some minds, arose from the thought, that whatever might befall him, the baron's heir would share in it. At first, when he had been removed to Sudley, mild measures were resorted to. He was lodged in a comfortable apartment, fed plentifully, and promised his freedom with whatever reward he might claim, if he would but speak satisfactorily as to the lost child. When this failed, he was sent to the keep, and for a week black bread and cold water were the only articles of aliment supplied; and then the *peine forte et dure* was resorted to. But though his face was swollen, and of a livid, purple hue, and the eyes seemed starting from their sockets at the pressure on his chest, as he lay with his limbs extended on the earth, yet would he not speak the word which would have released him from all this suffering. The extreme punishment, however, of adding weights until nature could sustain no more, was delayed from day to day. The baroness had twice given birth to children who had survived but a few hours; the third had lived, but it was a daughter; and as she dwelt upon the approaching extinction of their noble line, she dared not permit the order to be given that might deprive her of all hope. Day after day were the weights pressing and stifling, and forcing the blood that still crept through his veins to his extremities, and distending the hands and feet with a feeling of agony. But though the pressure was at each time removed when the leech pronounced the prisoner exhausted, yet it appeared repetition, though slow, would effect the

work as surely as if the punishment had been in the first instance applied in all its legal rigour.

Calverley, although he feigned to exert himself, would not in reality seek for Margaret while Holgrave lived; but Black Jack, who, after eluding the pursuit of Leicester, returned to Sudley, and domesticated himself in the castle under the hope of supplanting Calverley, had, of course, no motive for deception; and the baron's offer of gold was too tempting not to call forth all his ingenuity. But neither he, nor fifty other mercenaries who were out upon the scent, could discover the track.

Holgrave had been about a month a prisoner, when Sir Robert Knowles came to Sudley, to announce that Richard would honour the castle with his presence on the following day, and on the next proceed on to Gloucester to hold a parliament. As they were sitting at the evening banquet—

"My Lord de Boteler," said Sir Robert Knowles, "do you remember the circumstance of a certain vassal of yours being accused of shooting a buck?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"His name, I think, was Stephen Holgrave—the same Holgrave that was among the rebels, is it not?

"The same man, Sir Robert."

"So I thought," returned the knight; "but, however, that must not weigh now. Have you a vassal named John Byles?"

Calverley, who was handing a replenished goblet to Sir Robert's page, started so much at this interrogatory, that the wine-cup dropped from his hands.

"Yes," replied De Boteler.

"Has that man a wife named Mary?"

"He has," quickly replied Isabella, unable to divine the cause of such singular enquiries.

"Then, my lord, I request that John Byles and his wife be instantly brought before us; and with your leave, no one passes from this hall except my page, till they appear," continued Sir Robert, as he observed a movement in the steward, indicating an intention to retire.

"Martin," he added to his page, "go you to one of the servitors in the court-yard, and tell him to accompany you to this John Byles; you know how to keep your counsel, and remember, that the Baron de Boteler commands John Byles and his wife to come instantly to the castle. Do you not, my lord?"

"Yes, if it is your pleasure," said the baron, with a smile.

"I perceive," resumed Sir Robert, as the page withdrew, "that my conduct surprises you; but I cannot yet explain."

The surprise, indeed, was not confined to the individuals who sat at the upper table; gradually, as the purport of Sir Robert's words was whispered about, did the hall become hushed, and the eyes of those who sat below, and of those who were in attendance, were fixed with a kind of painful expectation upon the baron's guest. The domestics, however, were not so entirely engrossed by Sir Robert as to be wholly unmindful of Calverley; and significant nods and smiles were exchanged, as they saw, or fancied they saw, evidences of extreme agitation in the steward. After a few minutes' expectation, John Byles and his wife were ushered in by the page.

Sir Robert looked inquisitively at the yeoman and his wife, but more particularly at Mary; and, as if he read her character in her countenance, said something in a low voice to De Boteler, who instantly ordered Byles to retire into the anti-room till called for. The door being closed, the baron, at Sir Robert's request, bade Mary Byles approach. Mary, upon entering the hall, had looked a very comely sort of personage; but as misgivings gave place to the flattered confidence which had given firmness to her step as she entered, she now presented a totally different aspect.

"Come closer to the table, Mary Byles," said Sir Robert, addressing her in an authoritative, but yet in a familiar tone—"come nearer; and with my Lord de Boteler's leave, I shall ask you a few questions." Mary curtsied, and rather hesitatingly approached the foot of the table.

"Now, Mary Byles, I wish you to tell me what kind of a night it was when John Byles and your servitor, Sam, went into my Lord de Boteler's chase to kill a buck?"

Mary was of a florid complexion; but at this unexpected question, she stood before the searching look of the baron with her cheeks as colourless as if she had been struck by the angel of death.

"Are you striving to recollect?" asked Sir Robert, without any symptoms of anger.

"I don't understand your lordship," at length tremblingly articulated Mary.

"Do you not?—I think I speak plain language—however, if you forget the appearance of the night when the buck was shot, perhaps you can tell me on what day of the week your man, Sam,

managed to get into Holgrave's cottage, and steal the shafts from the quiver over the fire-place ?"

Up to this period the hall had been as still as if Sir Robert and Mary were its only occupants; but at this point a murmur arose, as if by the power of magic, each was in a moment convinced of Holgrave's innocence.

"Peace!" vociferated De Boteler—"Answer, woman!" he continued, stamping his foot.

Mary saw that she had nothing to do but deny, and this she did most stoutly.

"Wretch!" said De Boteler, "Why do you not tell the truth?"

But Mary was not to be intimidated, and Sir Robert, perceiving he could gain nothing from her in this way, arose, and approaching the baroness, who had been looking on with much interest, said, softly, "My Lady de Boteler, I wish to put a question or two to this woman, but as what I shall ask must be distressing to you, perhaps you had better retire."

"No—no," replied Isabella, "do not fear for me?—This is so strange, I must hear what you have to say."

"Prepare yourself then, lady," said Sir Robert, and he resumed his seat.

"Mary Byles," he began, "I have one more question to ask you. How many drops of that fatal potion was it that Edith Holgrave told you to give my lord's infant?"

A smothered sob from Isabella, now added to Mary's perplexity, her cheeks and temples became flushed, and, with a bewildered look, she said—

"I don't know — I don't remember any thing about it!"

"Now, Mary Byles," resumed Sir Robert, speaking more decisively than he had yet spoken, "I insist upon your giving me a true answer to this — Did you not say to your husband, on the evening you returned from Gloucester, after Edith's trial, 'Edith's death lies like murder on my conscience; oh, I wish I hadn't taken Calverley's advice, but had told my lady of the mistake?'"

"Calverley!" repeated De Boteler, "What did you say of Calverley? What, did Calverley advise you to?"

Mary had sustained herself wonderfully well, considering how unprepared she had been, but this last interrogatory of Sir Robert, conjuring up, as it were, Edith's ghost, was too much; she struggled against nature for an instant, and then, giving an hysterical shriek, fell back in strong convulsions.

Two of the domestics were ordered to bear her from the hall; and, when there was again silence, Sir Robert said, "That woman is too artful to betray herself! Let Byles be called in?"

The yeoman re-entered, and Sir Robert began, in a voice so familiar, that Byles was thrown off his guard. "John Byles, how came you to be so foolish as to fall in the ravine the night you and Sam went to shoot the buck?"

"It wasn't I who fell in, my lord — it was —"

"—Sam—who fell in," said Sir Robert, as he saw Byles hesitate to proceed farther. "You are right, yeoman, it was Sam, and you helped him out — but I desire you to tell me, if you had succeeded in conveying the buck to Holgrave's shed, how

many nobles Master Calverley was to have given you?"

Byles looked at his interrogator as if he had been the evil one himself; but he had committed himself, so he thought it the wiser way to say nothing.

"Why do you not answer, man?" continued Sir Robert, at the same time giving De Boteler a glance, intimating that he wished not to be interrupted. "I know how many the steward promised you, but I desire to know how much you received."

"I neither gave nor promised him any thing," said Calverley, approaching the table under the impression of giving a tone to what Byles should say.

"Thou liest, kern!" said Sir Robert, rising suddenly, and in a voice which made Calverley start back. "My Lord de Boteler, I accuse your steward of bribing yonder caitiff to slay a buck with shafts stolen from Stephen Holgrave, and then to lay the slaughtered animal in Holgrave's barn. I also accuse him of prevailing upon that man's wife to lay the crime of murder upon an innocent woman! And, my lord, if you will hold a court to-morrow morning, one whom I found in the Tower, will prove my charges, and the wronged shall be righted."

"Calverley done all this!" said the baron in a tone of incredulity; but then, as the steward's persevering hostility to Holgrave flashed across his mind, it seemed to bring conviction.

The hall at this moment presented a strange spectacle. Every individual except Isabella and Oakley, were on their feet. The domestics, though

not venturing to proceed beyond their own table, were bending their heads eagerly forward, to look more particularly at Calverley than at Byles, as if this charge of crime had developed some new feature in the man. Byles, with his hale complexion, changed to the paleness of a corpse, stood trembling at the foot of the table, at the head of which was standing De Boteler, with a flushed countenance and his eyes fixed upon Calverley, with such a look, that if the glance of an eye could have killed, the steward would have been consumed on the spot. There was an instant of silence, or at least there was nothing but an indistinct murmur from the lower end of the hall; and Calverley, who seemed strangely composed, took advantage of the moment to say, though without raising his eyes —

"My lord, whatever charges Sir Robert Knowles may have against me, I am ready to meet them."

"Peace, wretch!" said De Boteler, choking with passion. "Here, let these plotters be confined separately till the morrow—and, Luke," he added, to the old steward, "let you and John Oakley go instantly to Holgrave, and see him removed from the keep, and put him into a warm bed — and take ye a flask of wine and pour some down his throat — and see that the leech attend him. He now turned to Isabella and strove to dispel from her mind the sad thoughts that the last half hour had called up, but it was not, as the baron imagined, the remembrance of her murdered child alone, which had sent a paleness to her cheek, and a tremor through her frame; it was rather the thought that through judging rashly she had been

an accessary to the death of one who perhaps deserved reward rather than punishment.

The next morning the hall was again converted into a court of justice. De Boteler took his seat, and the eager vassals crowded in to hear the expected justification of Stephen Holgrave. Calverley, as being a party accused, was of course incapacitated from filling the accustomed situation in the court; and as old Luke was too infirm, Oakley was selected. Black Jack had begun to be very calculating — a portion of the money he had received in London had already disappeared in his secret debauchery. The bribe was not so large as he had been led to expect, and he had sense enough to know that his habits were not adapted for turning what remained to any account. The stewardship of Sudley was so easy and profitable! The very thought of it was delightful—and as nothing had as yet transpired to criminate him, he accepted of the temporary dignity with the most sanguine hopes that Calverley's delinquencies might fix him in it permanently.

But lo! when Calverley's prison door was opened, for the purpose of conducting him to the hall, he was not to be found! It was to no purpose that the baron stormed and threatened, no trace of Calverley could be discovered; but John Byles was brought forward, and, upon being confronted with his own servitor, and promised that if he made a full disclosure, the punishment of the crime should be remitted, he confessed all with which the reader was made acquainted in the early part of the tale. The question of poisoning was then put, but Byles had cunning enough to remember that no one was privy to this but Calverley,

and as it might peril Mary's life, he stoutly denied all knowledge of the matter. Mary Byles, who had also been kept in durance, was then introduced, but she was more collected than on the preceding evening, and would admit nothing. She knew not any thing of the buck — and she could say nothing more respecting the poisoning than she had already said at Gloucester, and the supposition of Edith's innocence, was compelled to rest upon the servitor's oath, who swore that he had heard Mary say, on the evening she returned from Gloucester, what Sir Robert had repeated. This, coupled with the circumstance that, together with the poisoning, Mary had denied what her husband had admitted, and what could not have happened without her knowledge, brought sufficiently conclusive evidence to convince every one that Edith had died a martyr to Mary's cruelty or carelessness.

As the baron had promised not to punish, Byles and his wife were dismissed unharmed; but from that hour forward, they were regarded by all as under ban, and therefore shunned as much as possible. We should premise, however, that before Byles was permitted to leave the hall, Stephen Holgrave was led in, that he might receive a public acquittal. When Holgrave entered, supported by one of the servitors, and, appearing unable to stand, was seated on a stool, Sir Robert Knowles, who had more than once taken a strong interest in him, started up, and was about to make some observation; but recollecting himself, he resumed his seat, and remained silent. De Boteler himself felt a glow of shame and a qualm of conscience, as he

looked upon the white, swollen face, and bent and shrunken form of one who had, in the moment of peril, sprung, with the vigour and ferocity of the tiger, between him and death. Holgrave had not been informed why the agonizing punishment had been remitted, nor why he had been placed in a comfortable bed, and every attention paid him ; and he only suspected that, perceiving severity could effect nothing, they were unwilling to lose their victim, and wished again to try the effect of a milder treatment. His suspicions seemed confirmed, when, upon an order from De Boteler, a page approached, and presented him with a cup of wine. Although, as we have said, suspecting the motive of so much indulgence, he drank the wine, and then, looking round the hall, wondered why there had been such a gathering of the vassals, and why their looks were bent upon him with such friendly interest, and why words of pity and triumph were murmured amongst them ; then he wondered why Jack Straw was sitting in Calverley's place, and what fault John Byles and his wife had committed, that they stood there like criminals. These thoughts, however, had scarcely passed through his mind, when the baron addressed him in a gentle tone.

" Stephen Holgrave," said he, " you remember, some seven years since, being accused of shooting a buck in my chase. It is not to repeat the charge that I sent for you, but, before this noble sir and these vassals, publicly to acquit you of the base deed. He who stole your arrows, and shot the animal, stands there !" and he pointed towards Byles. —" And he who bribed him to be a thief

and a liar, aware of his guilt, has fled, and has for the present escaped my vengeance. And now, Holgrave, it repents me that I dealt so hardly by your mother, for, as I hope to die a Christian's death, I believe she died innocent."

Sir Robert had remarked the sudden flush, and then the death-like paleness, which had passed over Holgrave's face, as his glance fixed upon Byles; and perceiving that, as his dead mother was spoken of, he became excessively agitated, he ordered his page to carry him another cup of wine; and the two criminals being removed, De Boteler continued,

"Approach, Stephen Holgrave."

Holgrave arose, and though he trembled, excitement had lent him such strength, that he walked up to the baron without assistance. De Boteler then, taking Holgrave's right hand, pushed him, with a gentle violence, away, at the same instant repeating, in a loud voice, "Away! thou art free!" and then added, "Hear, all ye assembled, that I, Roland de Boteler, release Stephen Holgrave from his bondage, and that from henceforth he oweth me no allegiance, except what is due as a vassal in chivalry."

And now the vassals, who had hitherto kept in tolerable order, upon seeing Holgrave again a free man, set up such a joyful shout, that the approach of the royal guest was not known until the portals were thrown open, and Richard, leaning familiarly upon the arm of the Earl of Oxford, entered the hall.

"You hold a court to-day, my Lord de Boteler,"

said Richard, as the baron hurried forward between the ranks of the shrinking vassals to welcome the monarch.

Words of courteous gratulation were uttered by De Boteler, as he led his visitor to a splendid chair which had been prepared for him, and presented, on his knee, a cup of spiced wine. During this, Isabella and Lady Ann Knowles had entered the hall, and, after being presented to the king, Lady Ann whispered to Sir Robert, who requested that Holgrave, who was about to depart, although no longer a prisoner, should remain in the castle, at least for that day. Holgrave promised acquiescence, and the hall being cleared of the tenantry, Richard and the attendant lords, whom he and his favourite had by half an hour outstripped, presently sat down to a splendid banquet.

During their ride, Robert de Vere had acquainted Richard with the singular disappearance of his sister's infant son, and with the suspicions she entertained respecting Holgrave. That love of the marvellous, which seems inherent in youth, was awakened in all its vigour in the young king; and, as the repast concluded, he heard, with a feeling of pleasure, De Boteler ask permission to interrogate a vassal in his presence.

"Please your highness," continued the baron, "the man is exceedingly stubborn. We suspect him of having stolen our child, but nothing has as yet been able to extract a confession, though, perhaps, your highness's presence may have some effect."

The domestics at the lower table had withdrawn, and Oakley, who was continued in his functions as

steward, was ordered to see that Holgrave attended.

"Stephen Holgrave," said De Boteler, as the former approached, "I have sent for you, to certify, in this presence, that I restore to you the land you were once possessed of, with its stock and crops; and whatever you may need besides shall be given you from the stores of the castle: — it is only giving you back your own, Stephen. But it is his grace's pleasure, that now, as your late offences are forgiven, you make a full disclosure of whatever you know respecting my stolen child."

All eyes were now riveted upon Holgrave; and a mind, less firm, would have trembled and hesitated until the whole truth was either revealed or suspected: but Holgrave, although prepared for such interrogatories, did not appear disposed to give an immediate reply. He had lost the confidence in fair speeches he once possessed. His freedom had been torn from him, and, though now pronounced free, what surety had he that the morrow might not again behold him a bond-slave? Thoughts like these could easily be detected in the contraction of the brow, and compression of the lips; and there might also have been detected, together with a resentment for the suspicions which had been cast upon his mother, a determination not to subject himself to the chances of further persecution by acknowledging the wrong he had done. At this moment, when the colour was receding from De Boteler's cheek, and when every respiration which Isabella drew was distinctly audible, a figure, which had stood unnoticed behind one of the statues, moved on, and, ascend-

ing one step of the elevation, threw back a cloak from his shoulders and a cowl from his head, revealing the strongly marked countenance and imposing figure of John Ball! Several of the attendants sprung forward to secure him; but a motion from De Boteler restrained their zeal, and, without noticing the action of the menials, the monk, regarding those only who sat round the table, addressed them in that deep, solemn tone peculiar to him.

"Start not," said he, "John Ball is nót come to harm you; — he never harmed any to whom God gave the breath of life, — neither did he counsel the blood which has been spilt. A price is set upon his head — but think ye the homeless wanderer fears to die? Baron of Sudley, I have come thus far to tell you what I told you once before — that if ye will swear to set free the bondmen of Sudley, the child you mourn as dead shall be restored to you!"

"O! swear, Roland! swear!" said Isabella, starting from her seat, and, forgetful of all save her own intense feelings, she clasped her hands on her husband's shoulder.

"I do swear," said De Boteler, taking a crucifix from the monk, who extended one towards him, and kneeling before Richard; "I do swear, upon this blessed cross, and before my liege lord, that if my child is restored to me, so that I can claim him as my own, I will release every bondman within this manor, and that, from thenceforth, there shall be no more bondage in the barony of Sudley."

"Stephen, will ye restore the child?"

" I will," replied Holgrave, with softened feelings and a brightening countenance, " the child, my lord, shall be given up to you."

" He shall be given up," repeated the monk; and then, clasping his hands upon his bosom, he descended the steps, strode through the hall, and, in less than a minute, re-appeared, leading in Margaret and the child, and followed by the galleyman.

Although, from the growth of the boy thus introduced, it might be judged he was about eight years, yet there was that sparkling vivacity, and that lightness of lip and eye which belong to an earlier age; and, as the wandering glance of the dark eye, and the smile of the red lip, met De Boteler's gaze, a tumultuous throbbing in his bosom told him that the child was indeed his own.

Isabella rose, and attempted to approach the boy — but the body was not able to bear the fervour of the spirit. Her heart sickened, the light faded from her eyes, and she sank back in the arms of the sympathizing Lady Knowles.

" That boy is yours, my lord," said Sir Robert Knowles, " let who will be the mother!"

" Peace, profane jester!" said the monk. " Baron of Sudley, do you believe that this is the son thy lady mourned?"

" I do believe," returned the baron, in a more subdued voice than mortal had ever heard from him before; and he approached the child, who was nestling close to Margaret, and looking around with an abashed but inquisitive countenance.

" My Lord de Boteler," said Holgrave, drawing the child almost forcibly from Margaret, " as

I hope that my mother is a saint in heaven, the child is yours. I was a bondman — was motherless — childless — and I thought it would be no crime to make you, too, desolate!"

De Boteler looked at Holgrave as he spoke, but did not reply; but, placing his hand upon the full shoulder that rose above the boy's tunic, he bent his head down and kissed the child's forehead.

"The child is exceedingly like you!" remarked Richard.

"There is a resemblance, my lord," said Oxford: "but it is not likenesses nor assertions that will satisfy me—I require proof!"

"And proof you shall have," replied the monk. "Holgrave, declare how you obtained the child!"

Isabella, who had recovered her consciousness, and who now, with almost convulsive extacy, was embracing the child, cast an angry glance at her brother, as if she feared that some discrepancy in the proof might bring her right to claim him in question. De Boteler, however, did not appear displeased, but merely said, "Holgrave, you have not declared how you obtained the child."

"If it please you, my lord, when I was a boy, I was one morning rubbing down one of the late lord's horses for the servitor, whose duty it was to do it, when, all on a sudden, as I was stooping down to wipe the horse's feet, I saw the wall at the back of one of the stalls open, and out came the old baron. He looked round, but fortunately, or it may be unfortunately for him who is now lord, he did not see me."

"And you discovered where the secret opening led?"

" Yes — with all the curiosity of a boy, I afterwards found that the secret door led by some long dark steps to the bed-chamber of the old lord !"

" Did you mention your discovery to any one ?"

" To no one, until after I had stolen the child — and then I told all to father John."

" This story," remarked the Earl of Oxford, " requires proof as much as any thing else."

" You shall receive that of your own eyes," said Holgrave, " if it please you to accompany me ;" and Richard, expressing a wish to witness every thing connected with the strange discovery, arose, and, with De Boteler, Oxford, and Sir Robert Knowles, proceeded as we have before described, to the bed-chamber. " From that bed, my lord," said Holgrave to De Boteler, " I took the child — it slept soundly — I crept down these steps — it was a dark night — and I got home without being seen !"

" This is not satisfactory proof," said Oxford.

" My lord, I have more to shew you," resumed Holgrave.

They then descended to the stabling, and, followed by many inquisitive eyes, went on to Holgrave's cottage.

It was uninhabited, but the door was fastened, and Holgrave forcing it open, led the way into the deserted abode. A chill came over him as he removed the chest ; but taking up a shovel from a corner, where he himself had thrown it, he prepared to remove the clay. He hesitated for a moment, and then began his task ; — he had dug about a foot deep, when, raising up a slip of wood about one foot broad and two in length, the perfect form of

an infant, lying beneath, caused those who were looking silently on to utter an exclamation.

"Poor babe! it was a sad night I laid ye there," said Holgrave, bending over the grave, and looking earnestly at the little corpse; and then kneeling down, he attempted to raise one of the hands, but it dropped crumbling from his touch.

Holgrave, although he had exerted himself much during the last hour, was extremely weak; and this little circumstance affected him so deeply that he started on his feet, and, to hide the weakness of tears, turned away his head from those who were gazing upon him.

"I was a man, and I felt as a father," said Holgrave, turning again and looking at De Boteler, "and yet I stole your child, and dug that grave, and with my own hands laid in my little one; — and why did I do it? Because I had determined that your child should wear the bondage you had given to me."

"This seems strange language from a bondman," said Richard, aside to Oxford.

"The man has an obstinate spirit, your grace," returned the earl.

"De Boteler," said Sir Robert Knowles, "this bondage should never have been."

"Was I more than man, that I could tell the traitor Calverley deceived me?" impatiently returned the baron, as he felt, though not choosing to acknowledge it, that he had done wrong when he insisted on the bondage.

During this brief colloquy, Holgrave had again bent over the grave, and had taken up the box in which were deposited the articles that had been on

the young De Boteler. Sir Robert, mistaking his motive, observed, "You must not think of removing the babe, Holgrave. This hut is but of little worth — you can throw it down, and bring a priest to say a prayer over the spot; and then the grave will be as good as if it were in a churchyard."

Holgrave bent his head in acknowledgment to the knight; and, placing the box under his arm, observed, "I hid these, lest they should be witness against me; and now, if it please ye, noble sirs, to come back to the hall, I will restore them to my lady."

When the yeoman had returned to the castle, and presented the box to Isabella, the evidences it contained, in the dress and crucifix, were so conclusive, that the Earl of Oxford gave a kiss of welcome to the little Ralph.

"Baron of Sudley," said John Ball, "do ye acknowledge that child as your son?"

"I do, monk, and I will fulfil my vow. Stephen Holgrave, to you I give the charge of collecting all my bondmen; — see that they are assembled here to-morrow morning. They shall be freed*; and from henceforth, as I vowed, there shall be no more bondage in Sudley; and, by my faith! I believe I shall be better served by freemen than serfs."

"And, my Lord de Boteler, we feel much inclined to follow your example," said Richard. "The shire of Hereford is our royal patrimony — have ye a scribe here who can draw up a charter?"

Oakley was called upon, and desired to prepare an instrument, to the effect of freeing the bondmen of Hereford.

John Ball, who had looked on and listened with

a deep interest, now approached the king, and knelt before him.

"The work that I strove for has begun, and it will finish; but mine eyes will not live to see that day. From the hour that blood was shed I forsook the cause; but I hid myself from the snares that were laid for me; — for I said, surely the light shall yet rise up in darkness! and it has risen; and it will grow brighter and brighter; — but John Ball's task is done, and he gives himself up to the death that awaits him."

De Boteler said something in a low tone to Richard, who turned to the monk.

"Retire!" said he, "we shall consider of your punishment."

As the monk withdrew, Oakley, who had retired, for the purpose of transcribing the charter, re-entered; and the instrument being presented to Richard, received the royal signature. While this was being done, Oakley, under the impression that the affording a proof of Calverley's guilt, more tangible in its nature than mere assertions, could not possibly injure himself, and might turn to his permanent advantage, approached De Boteler, and, producing the prohibitory writ,—

"Please you, my lord," said he, "while searching among Thomas Calverley's writings for parchment, I discovered this."

"Discovered this among my steward's writings!" said the baron as, biting his lip with vexation, he spread open the parchment on the table.

"Why, my Lord de Boteler," said Richard, taking up the writ, and glancing over the charac-

ters, "this is a prohibitory writ from the chancery! Where was this found?"

"My liege, in a private box in the steward's room, which, it seems, he had forgotten to lock," replied Oakley, with that propriety which he knew how to assume.

"The galleyman had stood in the hall, a silent, but delighted, spectator of all we have detailed. His heart yearned to grasp Holgrave's hand, and tell him how much he rejoiced in his freedom; but he dared not presume so far until the yeoman should have been dismissed. Besides, his thoughts were bent upon another object: as Richard raised the parchment for perusal, the seals attracted his attention, and he instantly recognized it as one he had observed Calverley drop in Gloucester, at the time of Edith's trial; but as he saw the ungracious look the baron cast on Black Jack, he thought he would not irritate him further by mentioning it: yet, stepping forward as Oakley ceased, he said —

"Please your noble grace, that man lies. *I* found that parchment in an hostelry-yard at Gloucester, six years ago—I know it by the seals; and that John Oakley told me it was an old lease of no use, and so I gave it to him."

"And who are you, varlet?" said Richard, evidently more amused than offended, as he expected some fresh incident to grow out of this affair..

"Please your grace," replied Wells, encouraged by the king's manner, "I am a vintner in the city of London, and I came down to Sudley with Stephen Holgrave's wife, to see what could be done for her husband."

"By my faith!" my Lord de Boteler, "your

hall seems a fitting place to act miracles in," said Richard, laughing.

"There have, indeed, been strange things done here to-day, my liege," replied De Boteler, smiling, but at heart annoyed at the thoughtless observation.

"Oxford," said Richard, "ask the knave if he have any more disclosures to make."

"Please you, my lord," said Wells, "I have only to say again, that John Oakley did not find this writing in the castle, and that he is a traitorous liar, and that I here challenge him to mortal combat."

"Retire, kerns!" said De Boteler, glancing with anger at Oakley and the galleyman, "and settle your vile feuds as ye may. Disturb not this noble presence longer."

"Be not angry, my Lord of Sudley: we request you to ask yonder varlet why he calls his fellow such hard names?"

"Please you, my lord," said Wells, nothing daunted, "did not John Oakley get Stephen Holgrave from the forest of Dean?"

"He did," answered De Boteler, who now remembered Wells as he who had assisted Isabella.

"Then, my lord, I call that man a liar, because he said he found the parchment in the steward's room; and I call him a traitor and a liar, because he got Stephen Holgrave out of the forest of Dean, by saying, that of his own good will, he helped to lay his mother in a church-yard, when he was paid in good broad pieces for doing the work.'

Holgrave, weak as he was, and forgetful, even, of the royal presence, sprung upon Oakley. The

sight of the writ that would have saved his mother, almost maddened him. He did not exactly comprehend what had been said about the writ; but it seemed, that Oakley was in some measure connected with this, and the sudden conviction, that he was, indeed, the betrayer, gave him such a frantic energy, that Black Jack's face grew still blacker beneath his grasp, and he would have dashed him to the ground, had not the baron risen and commanded Holgrave to loose his hold.

"I think," said Sir Robert Knowles, who saw that it was only under the influence of strong feeling that Holgrave could at present be a match for Oakley—"I think it would be better that this retainer accept the vintner's challenge; and should he worst him, then he and Holgrave can settle their quarrel, when a few days shall have given him more strength. This, despite of Holgrave's assurances that his strength was undiminished, was decided upon, and the galleyman and Oakley were directed to hold themselves in readiness to try the strength of their weapons on the morrow. They were then ordered to withdraw—Oakley and the galleyman to be lodged that night in the retainers' court, and Holgrave to tell over all he felt to the affectionate Margaret, who, for the present, at Isabella's request, was to occupy an apartment in the castle.

The more Oakley thought of the challenge he had been compelled to accept, the less relish he felt to engage in it. Even should he conquer his strong-knit antagonist, he must have to fight over again with the vindictive Holgrave; and he cursed the folly which had induced him to produce the writ. However, he had found a golden treasure

in Calverley's room: and as he lay tossing on his sleepless bed, he resolved to take an opportunity, during the bustle of the next morning, to leave the castle. And, indeed, during the bustle of the next morning, an individual of much more consequence than Black Jack might have escaped unheeded.

The incidents of the previous day had caused a strong sensation, not only at Sudley and Winchcombe, but in all the immediate neighbourhood. The presence of a king; the recovery of an heir; and the unheard-of circumstance of giving freedom to the serfs of a whole county, were things well calculated to attract crowds to the castle: and then then there were the feastings, and the rejoicings which were to gladden the hearts of all who chose to partake.

The gentle class, and the most respectable portion of the tenantry, prognosticated only evil from this all-advised proceeding. As they looked on, and saw the bondman and nief, with animated countenances, pouring into the hall, and beheld De Boteler, in the presence of the king and the nobles, give freedom to all who approached him, and order that from henceforth they should hold what land they possessed by copy of court-roll, they wondered how far this unprecedented innovation would extend, and how people were to get their land cultivated, if the peasant was allowed to go where he liked, and work as he pleased.

When the last bondman was freed, John Ball, who had stood looking on with devouring eyes, knelt down, and raising up a cheek suffused with the crimson of high-wrought feeling, and eyes glis-

tening and radiant, ejaculated, in a scarcely audible voice,

"Now will my soul depart in peace, since mine eyes have beheld this day!—now will my spirit rejoice, since thou hast had compassion on them that were in fetters, and hast released the children of the bond!" Then rising, and extending his clapsed hands towards De Boteler, he said, in a louder tone, "May the Lord add blessings upon thee and thy children! May length of days be thy portion, and mayest thou dwell for ever in the house of the Lord." Then approaching Holgrave, he continued—"Farewell, Stephen! The clemency of the King has saved my life, and the voice of the anointed priest hath proved me cleansed of the leper spot—but I must now be a dweller in a strange land. Tell Margaret that we may not meet again; but surely, if the prayers of a brother can aught avail, mine shall be offered at the footstool of the Highest for her. I could not bid her adieu. Bless thee, Stephen, and bless her, and fare thee well!" He then pressed Holgrave's hand.

"Nay, father John," said Holgrave, with emotion, "we must not part so."

It was to no purpose that the monk requested, and then commanded, that he should be permitted to pursue his journey alone. Stephen insisted upon accompanying him out of Gloucestershire, and father John, to avoid contention, feigned to defer his departure; but when the tables were spread, and the domestics and vassals had sat down to the feast, Margaret, who had been seeking the monk about the castle, looked and looked

again among them all, and at length had to weep over the certainty that she should never more behold her brother. Nor did she; for John Ball did not long survive his exile. On the second anniversary of the bondman's freedom, his own spirit was freed, and his body rested in the cemetery of the monastery of Cistercium, in Burgundy.

But to return. When the ceremony of enfranchisement was fairly over, there arose the cry for the combat, and great was the general disappointment when, upon the galleyman's standing forth prepared for the encounter, no Oakley could be found. "He has skulked off to the craven Calverley, I'll warrant," said one. "Aye, aye, as sure as the sun shines, they are sworn brothers," said another: "they think more of saving their heads than sparing their heels. "Did ye ever know one who could ead and write, who didn't know how to take care of his carcase," said another, with a sagacious nod; but though these good folks were all very shrewd, they did not happen to fall upon the truth, which was simply this, that as Black Jack was watching an opportunity to escape, without observation, he happened to see the cloak and cowl the monk had thrown off when first appearing in the hall, lying in a corner of the court-yard, where it had been carelessly placed by one of those whose business it was to keep the hall in order. It instantly occurred to him that this might be of use, and contriving to remove the cloak, he put it on, and, thus disguised, succeeded in leaving Sudley; but though disguises had so often befriended him, it proved fatal in this instance, for, upon taking a northerly direction, as one where he was least

likely to be known, he was recognized as a leader of the commons, and his monkish dress inducing a suspicion of his being John Ball, (the monk's pardon not being known), Oakley, although swearing by every thing sacred that he was no monk, was hanged without form of trial, at St. Albans, as one who had stirred up the bondmen to insurrection.

Little more remains to be said. De Boteler, upon discovering that Byles held Holgrave's land by virtue of the mortgage transferred by the usurer to Calverley, pronounced, in the most summary way, the whole thing illegal. Byles was dispossessed, and the farm, now the largest in the manor, returned to Holgrave, who thus, like old Job, became the possessor of greater wealth after his misfortunes than he had enjoyed before.

When Holgrave's strength was re-established, he waged battle with Byles to prove the yeoman's guilt and his mother's innocence. Byles was no craven, but he was vanquished and mortally wounded, and, when death was upon him, confessed the whole transaction. Mary, with her children, fled on the instant; and, some few years after, was seen by Merritt, who had again become a peaceful artizan, begging alms in London.

Isabella, although, of course, never acknowledging her share in the writ, yet, as some atonement, gave a large benefaction to Hailes Abbey, on condition that a certain number of masses should be offered up for Edith.

The little Ralph grew up with a strong predilection for the sea, contracted, it was often suspected, by the strange stories he had heard the

galleyman repeat; and it is upon record, that Ralph de Botcler, Baron of Sudley, was the first high admiral of England. The young heir always evinced a strong affection for Margaret; so much so, indeed, as sometimes to raise a suspicion in the baroness that her son loved his foster-mother better than herself.

We must not forget Bridget Turner, who was so affected at the death of her husband, and perhaps, too, at the failure of the rising, that she took a journey on foot from Maidstone to Sudley, on purpose to reproach Holgrave with having been the cause of her husband's death. Margaret strove to tranquillize her unhappy feelings, and Holgrave endeavoured to convince her that, although Turner's removal from Sudley might be attributed to him, his connexion with the rising was his own act. And at length Bridget, finding that she was paid more attention by Margaret and Holgrave than she had received even from her own son, took up her permanent abode with them: and sometimes, when she could get the ear of an old neighbour, and talk of former times, and tell what her poor husband had done for Holgrave, when he was a bondman, she felt almost as happy as she had ever been.

About twenty years after this, Margaret, who had become a full, comely dame, and was by many thought better-looking now than in her youth, was one day bustling about her kitchen, for on the morrow her eldest son, who had accompanied the Lord Ralph on a naval expedition, was expected to bring home, from the galleyman's, in London, a counterpart of the pretty little Lucy. She was

busy preparing the ingredients for some sweet dish, when one of Holgrave's labourers came in, and requested her to go to his hut directly, for an old man, who seemed dying, desired much to see her. Providing herself with a little wine, Margaret hastened to the cottage; and here, on a straw bed, lay a man with grey hairs hanging about his shoulders, and with a face so emaciated, and a hand so skeleton-like, that she almost shuddered as she looked. The invalid motioned the man to withdraw, and then, fixing his black eyes, that appeared gifted with an intense — an unnatural brilliance, upon Margaret, who seemed fascinated by the gaze, he said in a tremulous voice, —

"Margaret, do you know me?"

"Know you! — know you!" she repeated, starting from the seat she had taken beside him, and retreating a few steps.

"Do not fly me, Margaret. I cannot harm you — I never could have harmed *you*. — Do you not know me?"

"Surely," said Margaret, trembling from head to foot — "surely it cannot be —— "

"I see you have a misgiving that it is Thomas Calverley — it is he! But be seated, Margaret, and listen to the last words I shall ever more breathe in mortal ear."

Margaret was so shocked and overpowered, that she obeyed.

"Margaret," said the dying man, as he raised himself a little from his bed, "I know not why I sent for you, or why I dragged my weary limbs from beyond the sea to this place; but as I felt my hour was coming, I longed to look upon you

again. You are and have been happy—your looks bespeak it: but, Margaret, what do mine tell of? —Of weary days and sleepless nights—of sickness of heart, and agony of soul—of crime—of pain—of sorrow, and deep, destroying love!" His strength was exhausted with the feeling with which he uttered this, and he sunk back on the bed.

Margaret was exceedingly agitated, and was rising to call for assistance, but he caught her hand in his cold grasp. "Do not go yet," he said, in a low voice—"I came far to see you!" His grasp relaxed, and Margaret, drawing away her hand, poured some wine in a cup, and held it to his lips; he swallowed a little, and, looking up in her face, she saw that his eyes were filled with tears. "You are going to leave me, Margaret?"

"Yes," she replied, "I must go now, but I will see you again."

"Never!—you will never see me again!" he said, with fresh energy: "but, before you go, tell me that you forgive me all that is passed."

"I do forgive you, indeed, as truly as I hope to be forgiven!" said Margaret, affected—and turning away, she left the cottage.

On the third day from this, Calverley, bearing the felon's brand, unwept and unknown, was laid in the stranger's grave.

THE END.

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LEITCH RITCHIE,

Author of "Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine," "Heath's Picturesque Annual," "Turner's Annual Tour," "London Nights' Entertainments," &c.

This new and important undertaking has now received a four months' trial; and the result is a determination, on the part of the proprietors, to carry on the series with redoubled spirit and energy. The patronage of the public, and the prompt, manly, and generous support of the periodical press throughout the country, leave them no excuse for carelessness or timidity; and they pledge themselves, therefore, without hesitation, to spare neither personal labour nor expense in redeeming the promise of the Prospectus, by producing a series of works of fiction "*greatly cheaper than the cheapest, and fully as good as the best that have preceded them.*"

A reduction of more than *two-thirds* in the price of an original novel (effected in the Library of Romance) is of itself an important consideration, in times when economy is a matter both of fashion and necessity; but there are other circumstances connected with the form of the work which are equally deserving of public attention. Hitherto it was as necessary to extend a work of fiction to three volumes as a tragedy to five acts. The publisher was a kind of literary Procrustes, and compelled the *Attic* wayfarers who fell into his hands *to be all of one size*. This would have been comparatively a slight evil, or no evil at all, if the scale had been a moderate one; but it may be conceived what pulling and stretching were necessary in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and how long, and lean, and lank, and shapeless, the victims looked after the operation. We, too, have a standard of our own; but it is short enough to be reached by any author of respectable dimensions. Compression, therefore, will be our chief labour; and, generally speaking, the sufferer himself will have most cause to rejoice.

It has been suggested to the proprietors by the Circulating Libraries, that the volumes of the Library of Romance are inconveniently long, and should be rendered capable of being divided into two, so as to enable them to supply their subscribers with the usual quantum of reading at a time. This appears to be nothing more than reasonable; and it has, therefore, been determined that in future each volume shall be divided into parts, or books, so as to admit of its being bound up, at the option of the possessors, into separate volumes. To effect this more easily, the work will be sold to the Libraries in sheets as well as bound.

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